

Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board Public Meeting on
Oversight of Complex, High Hazard Nuclear Operations

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Good Morning, Mr. Vice-Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the Board this morning regarding the Defense Programs approach to ensuring the safe management and operation of the nuclear security enterprise.

Defense Programs Safety Approach and Safety Philosophy

Consistent with the rest of the Department of Energy, the foundation of Defense Program's safety philosophy is Integrated Safety Management (ISM). Defense Programs and its Management and Operating Contractors continue to mature their implementation of ISM. Over the past 15 years, ISM has been instrumental in improving our ability to perform our mission safely. Senior leadership, including previous Deputy Administrators, has remained committed to the importance of ISM across the nuclear security enterprise. ISM has consistently been embraced through changing administrations and remains the cornerstone of our safety philosophy.

One of the key principles of Integrated Safety Management is line management responsibility for safety. For Defense Programs, I am ultimately responsible for the safety of our facilities and operations. Although I expect Defense Programs contractors to be responsible and accountable for safe operations at each site, this does not in any way diminish my responsibility as the senior Defense Programs line manager to ensure their safe operation. To support me in this responsibility, I hold headquarters line managers and support organizations responsible for addressing complex-wide issues, ensuring our site offices effectively oversee contractor performance, and ensuring adequate resources are available to safely carry out our assigned mission. I hold our site offices responsible for day-to-day oversight and expect them to focus this oversight on the nuclear and hazardous operations conducted by our contractors.

I also rely on each of our contractors to establish and implement safety management systems that reflect a commitment to safe operations and continuous improvement, and I hold them accountable through the performance evaluation process and other mechanisms for the safety of operations they manage. The implementation of robust assurance systems by each of our contractors helps ensure the effectiveness of these safety management systems.

Ultimately, the people responsible for doing the work are critical to ensuring the safety of that work. Worker involvement must occur at every level of the organization. Each of our contractors is expected to have a robust worker feedback and lessons learned program. Additionally, all workers and managers are encouraged to stop any work, on the spot, if safety concerns or risks are observed or if the person perceives a safety risk or concern.

Recent Accomplishments

In the past few years, we have continued to make progress in our implementation of ISM throughout the Defense Programs enterprise:

- Biennial reviews of NNSA site offices and headquarters by the Central Technical Authority's staff have provided effective oversight of federal functions in nuclear safety, resulting in significant performance improvement at several of our federal organizations;
- NNSA has matured and clarified its line management responsibilities for safety through the Functions, Responsibilities and Authorities Manuals. Headquarters and field organizations have developed and implemented processes and procedures to execute their safety responsibilities.
- NNSA has embraced Human Performance Improvement (HPI) initiatives as an effective tool for reducing human error in high risk activities. These concepts are being established and implemented at Defense Programs sites such as Pantex, Los Alamos, and Savannah River. NNSA seeks to utilize a key ingredient of HPI, worker participation, to improve the identification, control, and mitigation of error precursors. To support these initiatives, Defense Programs established a working group to share lessons learned and best practices for implementing human performance improvement initiatives across NNSA sites;
- Defense Programs has improved its implementation of training and qualification programs for personnel with safety related responsibilities at headquarters and site offices, including providing Nuclear Executive Leadership Training for senior managers;
- As part of the most recently awarded M&O contract, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory committed to ensure laboratory operations would pass a complete verification of the implementation of ISM. HSS is partnering with NNSA in this effort to complete the verification effort.
- Defense Programs participates and strongly supports various complex-wide efforts to improve the implementation of Integrated Safety Management. This year, for example, our Y-12 site co-hosted the annual ISM conference.
- At all sites, NNSA has continued to improve upon and focus on the key components of a safe basis for operations, including implementation verification, readiness reviews, and safety management programs.

Future Focus

One of the key functions of ISM is feedback and improvement. Defense Programs is committed to improving the implementation of ISM across the nuclear security enterprise. As part of this commitment, we understand that there remain and always will remain opportunities to improve at all levels. Some of the ongoing initiatives include the following:

- Defense Programs is actively working with our site offices and contractors to develop and improve performance objectives and measures for nuclear and worker safety;
- The effort to improve ISM at the activity level requires constant focus. A number of our sites (Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, for example) are involved in extensive efforts to improve their work control processes and implementation;
- Defense Programs has recently appointed its own champion at the headquarters level (Jim Winter) and is in the process of improving headquarters ISM implementation and working with site offices to improve the effectiveness of their ISM reviews and declarations;

Summary

Defense Program can not execute its critical national security mission without ensuring the safety of operations at our sites. We have a responsibility to the public and to our workforce to ensure that we carry out our mission effectively and efficiently, but that we do so in a manner that protects the public, workers and the environment. Everyone in the chain of command from me to the worker on the plant floor is responsible and accountable for ensuring that we accomplish our mission safely.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you this morning. Detailed responses to some of the lines of inquiry you had are submitted as written input for the record.

At this time, I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.