National Energy
Board

Office national
de l'énergie

Safety Culture Workshop
Summary Report

Listening, Leveraging and Learning from Each Other

April 10, 2018

The National Energy Board (NEB) hosted a Safety Culture Workshop on 20 February 2018 at NEB Headquarters in Calgary, Alberta. This pilot initiative brought together 18 representatives from 7 NEB regulated companies and a number of NEB technical staff and executives to have an open dialogue on safety culture advancement challenges, successes, and best practices. The workshop facilitated meaningful conversation among the participants and encouraged sharing of experiences and learning from one another.

Prior to the workshop, participants were asked to identify key topics that would be most valuable to discuss. Assessing and improving safety culture was identified as a topic of interest and a session focused specifically on this subject. Implementing human and organizational factors in incident follow-up was also noted as an area of interest. A second session was held to better understand what organizations are doing in this area, and how these efforts could be improved. The outcomes of these discussions are captured in this report.

What We Heard about Safety Culture

All workshop participants described their efforts to advance safety culture. There were varying levels of organizational maturity in this area and variation in the scope of activities captured under the safety culture umbrella. Different experiences in assessing and improving safety culture resulted in diverse perspectives and opportunities to learn from one another.

Challenges

Workshop participants identified a number of challenges associated with their efforts to advance safety culture, including those related to:

- how regulators and industry effectively move beyond a compliance-only approach in order to best support continual improvement of safety outcomes;
- evaluating and monitoring contractor/sub-contractor safety culture;
- managing cultural change in organizations of varying sizes (small to very large entities) and changing workforces;
- increased cultural complexities following mergers and acquisitions, as multiple cultures amalgamate; and
- developing organizational competency and capacity in human and organizational factors, including safety culture assessment and improvement.

Successes/Best Practices

Workshop participants identified a number of successes and best practices associated with their safety culture efforts, including:

- leveraging knowledge and experiences of other organizations or industries (i.e., benchmarking and liaising with nuclear and civil aviation industries);

- ensuring clarity regarding process safety rather than just occupational health and safety (e.g., not relying on lost time injury rates as measure of safety culture and safety performance);
- sharing of high learning events and foundational stories to improve organizational awareness of threats; and
- targeting safety culture leadership training across all organizational areas (not just operations).

What We Heard about Safety Culture Assessment/Improvement

Challenges

Workshop participants identified a number of challenges associated with safety culture assessment and improvement efforts, including:

- using only surveys in cultural assessment impedes the organization's ability to identify potential blind spots;
- challenges with ensuring honest and open answers from staff, when using company personnel/management to collect data ; and
- needing tools to support more meaningful observations and knowing what questions to ask to collect the right information.

Successes/Best Practices

Workshop participants also identified a number of successes and best practices associated with safety culture assessment and improvement efforts, including:

- using computer based surveys for initial data collection as they support consistency in the preliminary assessment followed by additional data collection methods (e.g., interviews, focus groups, document reviews, and workplace observations);
- using a third party to support anonymity and open dialogue to gather honest responses;
- building internal capacity around safety culture as an integral step in advancing it throughout the organization;
- ensuring regular engagement with frontline workers in order to understand their challenges, leverage their suggestions, and provide feedback on solutions; and
- tying safety culture assessment data back to other organizational information (e.g., incident data) as a future learning opportunity.

What We Heard about Human and Organizational Factors in Incident Follow-up

Challenges

During this session, participants identified the following challenges associated with the implementation of human and organizational factors in incident follow-up:

- limited tools and guidance to support the implementation/integration of human and organizational factors; and
- needing increased capacity and competency in human and organizational factors in order to implement systemic changes to current practices.

Successes/Best Practices

Workshop participants identified a number of successes and best practices associated with integrating human and organizational factors in incident follow-up, including:

- using root cause and contributing factors analysis tools and techniques, including human and organizational factors categories; and
- using multi-disciplinary teams to conduct incident investigations and reviews to identify systemic deficiencies and reduce potential blind spots.

General Insights Regarding NEB Influence

Workshop participants shared a number of insights about how the NEB may influence safety culture advancement efforts. Suggestions for improvement included:

- identifying and sharing the NEB's own high learning events and foundational stories with regulatory staff in support of a culture of learning;
- leveraging the NEB's broader line of sight on industry-wide performance to share themes and trends that a single regulated entity may not have visibility of (i.e., constructive description of failures could be used for industry wide learning); and
- incorporating this knowledge into traditional compliance verification activities (e.g., inspections) to improve dialogue that proactively advances safety and environmental protection.

Participants also identified several topics that could benefit from additional guidance or tools including how to understand why specific safety culture dimensions exist and how to change them following an assessment, determining human factors categories for incident recording and trending and best practices used by regulators in other high hazard industries (e.g., nuclear, civil aviation, etc.).

Next Steps

Participant feedback and evaluation forms noted that this pilot workshop was valuable, and followed a good format with an appropriate group size. The consensus was that it would be helpful to have similar sessions to further explore topics that were identified.

As this pilot was successful, similar sessions may be planned for additional regulated entities.