

NRC's Safety Culture Summary (Revised November 20, 2009)

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has recently published a draft policy statement on safety culture in the *Federal Register* (November 6, 2009, 74 FR 57525) for a 90-day public comment period that ends February 4, 2010. The draft policy statement provides a proposed definition of safety culture that may eventually be considered for implementation into NRC's oversight programs.

1. What is safety culture?

SECY-09-0075 (ADAMS Number ML091130068), dated May 2009, provided a draft safety culture policy statement to the Commission. The draft policy statement defines safety culture as: *"that assembly of characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors in organizations and individuals, which establishes that as an overriding priority, nuclear safety and security issues receive the attention warranted by their significance."*

2. Why is safety culture important?

Safety culture is an important element for individuals and organizations performing or overseeing regulated activities and contributes to the safe and secure use of radioactive material. The importance of a positive safety culture for activities involving civilian uses of radioactive materials has been demonstrated by a number of significant, high-visibility events that have occurred in the past. Weaknesses in safety culture were identified as contributing factors to the events. Examples include:

- ▶ Iodine-131 therapy administered to lactating mothers that resulted in infant uptakes;
- ▶ Loss of control of sealed sources resulting in unnecessary exposures;
- ▶ Prostate brachytherapy performed without evaluation of seed placement;
- ▶ Peach Bottom Atomic Power Station inattentiveness by security officers; and
- ▶ Davis-Besse Nuclear Power Station reactor pressure vessel head cavity caused by years undetected boric acid corrosion.

3. What is the NRC doing to develop a safety culture policy statement?

The draft policy statement was published for a 90-day public comment period in the *Federal Register* (November 6, 2009, 74 FR 57525; ADAMS Number ML093030375). The draft policy statement emphasizes the importance that the NRC places upon individuals and organizations performing or overseeing nuclear-regulated activities to establish and maintain a positive safety culture.

- ▶ The NRC is seeking to develop a definition of safety culture and language describing areas important to safety culture that will be used in the development of a final safety culture policy statement. The goal of this effort is to set forth expectations for fostering a strong safety culture for all levels of a licensee's/certificate holder's organization. Agreement States will be encouraged to support the safety culture policy statement and to use the terminology. The NRC will be holding a set of public workshops to develop the safety culture terminology.
- ▶ The NRC is seeking public comment on its draft policy statement, which includes a set of questions for stakeholders to consider regarding safety culture, and will consider these public comments in the development of a final policy statement. After the NRC issues its final policy statement, the NRC will evaluate the policy statement content for implementation, as appropriate, into its oversight programs for NRC licensees/certificate holders.

4. How can licensees/certificate holders/stakeholders get more information on the safety culture effort (e.g., draft safety culture policy statement, history, upcoming workshop notices, etc.)?

The draft safety culture policy statement (74 FR 57525) is available for comment (<http://www.regulations.gov/search/Regs/home.html#docketDetail?R=NRC-2009-0485>). Other information relating to safety culture can be found at the NRC's safety culture website at: <http://www.nrc.gov/about-nrc/regulatory/enforcement/safety-culture.html>

5. How can licensees/certificate holders/stakeholders become involved?

You can provide comments on the draft policy statement to the NRC by February 4, 2010. You can participate in the NRC's effort to develop the safety culture terminology by participating in the upcoming public workshops by nominating someone to participate in the effort/roundtable discussions. Information on the public workshops will be published in the *Federal Register*. Furthermore, if you prefer to participate in this effort as a member of the audience or possibly remotely, visit the NRC's safety culture website for more information related to the upcoming workshops: <http://www.nrc.gov/about-nrc/regulatory/enforcement/safety-culture.html>.