



**The Deputy Secretary of Energy  
Washington, DC 20585**

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FROM: JEFFREY F. KUPFER   
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SUBJECT: Taking Integrated Safety Management to the  
Next Level: Strengthening Safety Culture

I want to bring to your attention an important effort that is ongoing and encourage you to embrace this effort with actions appropriate to your organizations. The Energy Facility Contractors Group (EFCOG) has partnered with the Department of Energy (DOE) over the past year to develop a path forward for improving Integrated Safety Management (ISM), our longstanding DOE framework for integrating safety into all aspects of mission performance. This effort has been approved for use by the EFCOG Executive Council. Related information is available on the EFCOG Web site at <http://www.efcog.org/wg/ism/>.

Safety culture is defined as an organization's values and behaviors, modeled by its leaders and internalized by its members, who serve to make safe performance of work the overriding priority to protect workers, the public, and the environment. Safety culture is viewed as a key factor in taking ISM implementation to the next level. DOE sites and contractor organizations have had success in focusing on various aspects of ISM and safety culture to improve their safety and mission performance. The DOE complex should broaden these successes so that safe performance of work becomes a core value, one that is deeply, strongly, and consistently held by leaders and workers throughout the DOE community.

A primary result of the EFCOG/DOE effort is the identification of three focus areas and associated attributes (see attachment) that will have the most impact for improvement: (1) Leadership; (2) Employee/Worker Engagement; and (3) Organizational Learning. DOE and industry experience shows us that safety culture is an important element in overall performance improvement. This experience includes numerous examples of major operational events that have occurred in organizations with weaknesses in their



safety culture. Experience also shows a strong positive correlation between mission accomplishment and safety performance. While DOE continues to make improvements in enterprise-wide safety metrics, DOE data also indicates frequent safety culture weaknesses that are factors in operational occurrences. From industry and DOE-specific experience, we know that increasing emphasis on building a strong safety culture is perhaps the most important area we can focus on at this time to take ISM to the next level.

The EFCOG/DOE Safety Culture Task Team products have been adopted by EFCOG for use by contractors during this year. During the one-year period, the Task Team will collect field experience, share success stories and lessons learned through the EFCOG ISM/Quality Assurance Working Group, and develop a final set of recommendations. EFCOG and the contractor community are to be applauded for proactively pursuing this activity.

It is important for DOE as the ultimate customer of these improvement efforts to provide the necessary leadership and to partner with the contractors through clear expectations for meaningful improvements. Improvements are needed in both the Federal and contractor communities. Senior management support and commitment is essential to achieving continuous improvements. I have asked the DOE ISM Co-Champions, Patricia Worthington and Frank Russo, to work with you, your line managers, and your ISM Champions to communicate the desired improvements in DOE culture, share good practices and lessons learned, and facilitate line improvement efforts.

As DOE enters a period of transition, I want to emphasize that ISM has been an enduring framework of DOE's approach for conducting work safely and has been embraced and endorsed by the last five Energy Secretaries. ISM is a cornerstone of DOE's strategy for safe mission accomplishment and continuous improvement. Attention to safety culture within ISM is part of a natural evolution of taking ISM implementation to the next level. I am confident that DOE can and will continue to improve ISM with safety culture as a key element for ongoing improvement.

Finally, I want to thank the Office of Health, Safety and Security and the DOE ISM Champions for their leadership and support on this effort. If you have any questions or need assistance, please feel free to contact Dr. Worthington at (301) 903-5926 or Mr. Russo at (202) 586-8395.

Attachment

cc: with attachment:

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## **Integrated Safety Management Safety Culture Focus Areas and Associated Attributes**

- Leadership
  - Clear expectations and accountability
  - Management engagement and time in field
  - Risk-informed, conservative decision making
  - Open communication/raising issues in an environment free from retribution
  - Demonstrated safety leadership
  - Staff recruitment, selection, retention, & development
  
- Employee/Worker Engagement
  - Personal commitment to everyone's safety
  - Teamwork and mutual respect
  - Participation in work planning and improvement
  - Mindful of hazards and controls
  
- Organizational Learning
  - Performance monitoring through multiple means
  - Use of operational experience
  - Trust
  - Questioning attitude
  - Reporting errors and problems
  - Effective resolution of reported problems