



Office of Corporate Safety Analysis

Quality Assurance

It permeates every aspect of our work from the shortest memorandum to the most complex nuclear operation, and yet it is often misunderstood, undervalued, and overlooked as an integral component of line management. "It" is Quality Assurance -- in principle and in application - and "it" is at the heart of every successful corporation, institution, and Federal agency. At its heart, QA is about making sure the applicable requirements for a given work activity are identified and followed.

The Department of Energy's statement of its quality assurance commitment is DOE Order 414.1C, Quality Assurance, which describes five guiding principles that form a blueprint for a quality culture. These are 1) the establishment of a QA program as part of a comprehensive management system; 2) the requirement of DOE management to support the implementation of QA; 3) the regular conduct of assessment and subsequent corrective action; 4) a mandate that employees at every level of the Department are responsible for producing quality work; and 5) the recognition that the risks to worker and public safety and health, as well as the environment, decrease and productivity increases with the appropriate rigor of quality assurance.

The "line," i.e., every DOE employee, is responsible for day-to-day QA implementation. The corporate responsibility, however, for ensuring the line implementation of these five principles rests within the Office of Health, Safety and Security (HSS). HS-20, the Office of Nuclear Safety and Environment, establishes and interprets QA requirements policy. HS-30, the Office of Corporate Safety Analysis, assists the line programs by managing and maintaining various programs and tools that support QA implementation, e.g., the Corrective Action Management Program, the Suspect/Counterfeit/Defective Items program, and software quality assurance. HS-60, the Office of Independent Oversight, conducts independent assessments for the continuous improvement of the Field and Headquarters.

The Secretary of Energy re-affirmed the Department's commitment to QA in a Department-wide memorandum, issued in April 2006. He directed all departmental elements to report on the status of their QA programs through a Department-wide survey, which was conducted last year. Following on the results of that survey, a multi-program office team led by the HSS Office of Corporate Safety Programs (HS-31) will look at the progress made over the past year by those same departmental elements in developing and implementing program-specific QA programs. The Secretary's ultimate goal through

these efforts is to achieve more complete and consistent implementation of the QA Order requirements across the Department.

In addition to maintaining and providing DOE-wide quality assurance policy and infrastructure, HSS, via HS-30, is also providing direct support to other DOE program and staff offices for their quality assurance initiatives. Examples of this collaboration include assisting the Office of Management in developing its QA guide for project management; aiding the General Counsel in developing and providing QA guidance for the National Environmental Policy Act process; and, at the request of the West Valley Demonstration Project (WVDP) DOE management, leading a team to perform a management assessment at WVDP.

HS-30 also maintains a positive and constructive partnership with the EFCOG through participation on its QA subgroup, which is part of the EFCOG Integrated Safety Management (ISM) Working Group. HS-30 is currently developing a Federal Quality Council that will build and encourage federal-contractor relationships, improve communications through shared lessons learned, and promote consistent interpretation and implementation of QA requirements.

QA, along with ISM, must be integrated into every work function no matter how complex. Quality assurance is not a collateral duty or external layer of management checks. When reduced to its most central idea, quality assurance is merely the function of having the right work performed right by the right people the first time. Only then can we fulfill the Secretary's vision of a "best in class" quality organization.