

HSS Safety Improvement Task Group
March 26, 2009 9:00am – 11:30am
20300 Century Blvd., Ste. 105 Germantown, MD

Attendees:

Mark Petts
Candy Sanchez
Mary Haughey
Ken Stein
Sherry Main
Cecelia Kenney
Dave Smith
Bert Davis

Call to order

9:15am meeting started.

Candy called the meeting to order and roll call was taken.

Review and approval of minutes

Mary stated that she had one question regarding the minutes and had sent it to Candy regarding the combination of communication and education. She felt the two should remain together. The group as a whole decided to leave the two categories separate.

There was another question about the headers labeled “HSS-Controlled” and “Non-HSS Controlled.” Mary moved to take headers out of notes. Mark seconded the motion and the motion passed.

Review and approval of agenda

Next, followed a discussion that a discussion of the charter was missing from the agenda. There was a discussion about the membership section. The group agreed to revise the charter to state in the membership section that the union representative will vote, and that union participation does not negate union obligations to employees. Mary is now a voting member of the task group.

Motion: Mark moved to accept the agenda as modified. Ken seconded the motion. The motion passed. The agenda was accepted as modified.

Member Reports

Ken started off with the member reports of feedback from colleagues included the following:

Education - we need a robust online video/training segment similar to security in which we go over issues relevant to our environment (i.e. escape procedures, clutter, hazardous material, safety-related drills, tornado drills, smoke and water on floor.) Any past incidents that have occurred should be summarized and posted, along with lessons learned from those incidents.

Communication – transparency is important. There would be more credibility given to the program if it is more transparent.

Facilities Management – heating system should be cleaned and inspected. Air quality should be evaluated. Is the system operating properly, as it was when originally installed? The program, as a whole, needs an overhaul.

Electrical System – some switches and outlets are original from when the building was constructed (Germantown). Grounding needs to be proper and safe. Test the grounding system.

Water – there should be a monitoring program for water quality. Mary gave an example about water fountains tested a few years ago for lead. Why isn't there a routine program in place?

Asbestos – What is the plan to monitor and manage asbestos? This should be online to maintain transparency. Dave Smith gave the example about an electrician at the Smithsonian whose story was on the front page of the Washington Post. We should bring in MA into the fold to be engaged in dealing with the asbestos issue. Our efforts to include them will show transparency even if their actual effort/involvement is not transparent.

The suggestion was made that we tell MA in our report that the way things are currently being done is not an acceptable practice, and put them on notice that changes need to be made.

In Germantown, the Office of Science has also pointed out asbestos issue. Maybe HSS could partner with them to approach MA to change and improve current procedures.

Bert recommended focusing on short-term hazards first. Mary disagreed and said that all hazards should be addressed, even long-term ones.

The Safety and Health Group in NNSA asked for two (2) officials from the Albuquerque group to come to Germantown and Forrestal. They found that water tasted funny in water fountain and found that the UV light treatment process was not working. They discovered that there was no preventative maintenance program on water filtration processes for Germantown. NNSA and GSA are currently trying to address this issue.

Regarding Beryllium at LANL, there was an email asking about the Beryllium issue at the offices at LANL that was in the process of being addressed.

Summary of Ken's main points:

1. Good, thorough training program similar to Security's is needed
2. Transparency
3. Facilities Management Overhaul

Mary said that she didn't have a chance to obtain feedback from her colleagues, but that she may be able to talk to some members of the union later that day.

Mark had no feedback to share.

Candy next discussed her findings. She said that people weren't aware of the emergency phone numbers and contacts that people may need. Also, regarding an ergonomic assessment, people didn't know that there was someone to do that for employees. Ten (10) to thirteen (13) federal employees, when surveyed, made mention that there are holes in the floor.

Mary mentioned that the nursing staff in health units are now run by contractors only and only cover Federal employees, not contractors. There is now on average, one full-time nurse instead of two.

Mary mentioned that she could talk to Arnold Gueverra when he comes to HQ in a couple of weeks. Maybe we could work with him on training programs. We need to develop a tracking tool. At Westinghouse, Mary had employees from the engineering department give talks once a month on a particular issue to their peers. It worked well for very little money.

We need to make the training appropriate to the audience. In some groups, a brief lecture will be enough. In others, a video may be warranted.

Combine topics to get more bang for your buck. Turn it into a web-based format.

Need a video on ergonomics. Mary said we may already have one.

Need to have a reminder to people about what training resources are available to them, and include links to those resources on our own website.

If NTC can help put together a video and help outline what should be included in the video, we could move forward.

Perhaps there should be a mandatory annual refresher for the video, similar to the security refresher briefing we're all required to complete.

FEOSH orientation training is mandatory, but was not set up as annual training. Need to change info and make it new if it's annual training; otherwise, it's ineffective. Four out of seven modules should be new each year for FEOSH training.

Mark suggested that the task group members complete the FEOSH training. It's on OLC2. Need to sign into the system to take it before the next HSS Safety Improvement Task Group meeting. Make this an item for the next meeting to discuss the FEOSH training. (OLC2→Federal Employee Occupational Safety and Health Training)

The group agreed to look at FEOSH training before next meeting. Emergency and first aid contacts change every year, so they need to be updated.

Sherry suggested perhaps putting up a pop-up box on the system when it boots up, similar to the IT security pop-up boxes.

VPP meetings have some small safety-share at the beginning to teach a lesson before the meeting begins that seems to be effective.

It being after 10:00am, the group moved to eliminate the break on the agenda and move forward.

Arnold requested to be provided with an outline for training that we wanted a video prepared for. He recommended looking for subject matter experts to help develop the finished product. Our task: to provide a list of what should be included in the training. Annual training is not the only solution. We need a multi-pronged approach, such as office posters, etc. ORNL has a calendar they put out that has messages that children of lab employees have written about safety, along with their pictures, to help remind people of who we're all working and staying safe for.

FEOSH website to allow a direct link to our website = info we can feed to employees. If it's as easy as the click of a button, it's easier to get participation. Ken agreed that we can put together a set of links to be included.

In daily pop-up box, offer links to safety info, even though it goes to all of DOE, because other groups will duplicate what HSS does. Mary made a suggestion for the pop-up box wording: "Having problems with your back because of computers? If so, go to this website for helpful suggestions."

Do something actively, follow through with information, which is what we're doing. Unions can pass info along to the bargaining unit.

Dave mentioned that in HSS, managers' safety meetings take place, which may be a good place to push safety information to, so that that info gets shared and passed down the chain.

A break took place between 10:20 and 10:25am.

Ken made a comment that we also, as a group/organization, need to tell about the things we don't know or haven't fixed so that there is trust established through transparency.

Dave will send an email to the group with the URL for order about Headquarters along with procedures for submitting a concern.

Tracking system was discussed to be used internally to get something fixed.

Mary felt that on the webpage to voice concerns, we should also include a way to nominate someone for an award. People should be able to include the nominee's name and what they've done to deserve an award.

Dave felt we should foster a sense of ownership among individuals to be responsible for their own safety. He felt that whoever gives the award or reward is important, too.

Develop list of goals and ideas to address comments from colleagues

The group next moved on to revising the list of goals as a result of the above discussions, and the appropriate revisions were made to the original list.

What's next?

- Dave Smith will send video link for FEOSH training.
- Task Group members will review the FEOSH training video prior to the next meeting.
- Mary will try to find the email regarding water quality that she discussed and send it to the group.

Next meeting to be held Thursday, April 9, 2009 from 9-11:30am. Location, call in number and agenda to be determined and communicated.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30am.

FOLLOW-UP

Changes were made to the charter and sent to Candy for signature at the 4/9/09 meeting regarding updating the voting and quorum section. "With the exception of the bargaining unit representative(s) was removed from the paragraph."