

### ***5.3.3 Integration and Use of Feedback Mechanisms to Produce Improvement***

#### Issue

The Department needs improvement in consistency and use of the core ISM function of “feedback and improvement,” with emphasis on the “improvement” side.

#### Basis

The ISM core function, “feedback and improvement,” is not yet performing as intended, according to a variety of sources. For example, the recent (July 2004) DOE Office of Independent Oversight Lessons Learned Report identified the “feedback and improvement” function as having important weaknesses and is not well established or implemented. DOE and its contractors have a variety of feedback mechanisms, including occurrence reports, self-assessments, oversight assessments, non-conformance reports, and others. In general, the Department is good at collecting “feedback,” and not as good at making meaningful and lasting “improvement.” For the Department’s feedback mechanisms to be of benefit, deviations need to be reported and analyzed, and feedback mechanisms need to be integrated to identify problems and make improvements. Improved DOE attention to integration and use of “feedback and improvement” is very likely to generate improved attention and use by contractors as well. Effective reporting and improvement systems are essential elements of an effective safety culture, demonstrating core values of “questioning attitude” and “learning organization.”

#### Resolution Approach

To guide resolution of this issue, a cross-functional Department team will develop a clear set of core expectations (criteria) based on ISM and related HRO attributes that address:

- Increased leadership emphasis on reporting, issue evaluation, corrective actions, and follow-up to ensure corrective actions are effective.
- Training on use of various reporting mechanisms, including Employee Concerns processes, Differing Professional Opinion processes, Non-Conforming Items processes, issues management processes, and other feedback mechanisms.
- Increased use of positive feedback, recognition, and rewards for individuals who report errors and concerns, regardless of who caused the error.
- Increased integration and collective analysis of the results of various feedback systems to identify adverse trends or areas where increased attention is needed.
- Increased effectiveness of Corrective Action processes for analyzing identified issues, determining corrective actions, and closing items only after corrective actions are independently evaluated to be effective.
- Increased use of performance measures in understanding effectiveness of issues management and corrective actions management systems. Specifically, increased use of metrics related to “repeat findings” is needed.
- More effective self-assessments and line oversight of the “feedback and improvement” core function to make these efforts more effective.
- Effective roll-up of year-end contractor and site office feedback results in the annual ISM reviews to identify specific areas for increased attention in the following year, including inputs to the annual planning and budgeting cycle.
- Effective roll-up of year-end program office feedback results, based on input from the site annual ISM reviews, to identify new goals and direction for improvement in the following year, including inputs to the annual planning and budgeting cycle, and goal setting as in the DOE Management Challenges.

The reference set of expectations for reporting, integration and use of the feedback findings and improvement actions will address implementation differences between HQ program offices, field elements, and contractors. The Deputy Secretary will direct DOE organizations to use the “feedback and improvement” expectations in development/revision and implementation of DOE ISM system descriptions. Sites will develop and implement plans of action to improve their “feedback and improvement” processes to meet the expectations defined above. After at least one year of experience is gained in implementing newly issued DOE ISM system descriptions, the line managers will review implementation of the “feedback and improvement” element and make mid-course changes as needed. Line managers will review the responses to the ISM expectations as part of the line oversight program and make adjustments to expectations and oversight, as appropriate. The assessments of the effectiveness of feedback and improvement mechanisms will be conducted using CRADs that will ultimately be institutionalized as part of the development of the DOE Safety Oversight Manual (see section 5.1.2).

Deliverables/Milestones

**Commitment 25: Develop site office action plans to improve feedback and improvement.**

Lead: NA-1 and US-ESE

Deliverable: Site-level action plans to improve “feedback and improvement” core element performance.

Due Date: February 2006

**Commitment 26: Review the implementation of “feedback and improvement” core element through disciplined line management oversight program, and provide both a summary status report to the Secretary and mid-course direction to direct reports on improving the institutionalization of ISM into the annual Departmental planning.**

Lead: NA-1 and US-ESE

Deliverable: Report to the Secretary and direction to direct reports

Due Date: March 2007

Integration with ISM system

This topic is clearly focused on improving consistency and completeness of implementation of ISM Core Function #5 – Feedback and Improvement.