

Advancing Safety Culture across the Offshore Oil and Gas Industry

Canada- Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board, Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board, and Canada's National Energy Board

Today, regulators, like companies, are seeking to proactively strengthen the oil and gas safety system – sometimes through the establishment of management system requirements and sometimes through awareness and understanding of potential vulnerabilities in the system, such as those related to organizational culture. Culture influences what people see, hear, feel, and say. Perhaps most importantly, it influences the decisions and actions (behaviors) of people in an organization, and these behaviors at all levels ultimately drive safety outcomes and performance.

The development of a robust safety culture represents a key opportunity for both industry and regulators to continually improve safety and environmental protection performance. When an organization establishes and maintains a positive safety culture, it truly lives the underlying intent of its management system. There is a clear connection between what the company says it will do in its policies and procedures and what it actually does in practice. As a result, it scrutinizes every decision to ensure that risk is considered and managed appropriately. It also sets performance measures that provide feedback on the organization's current state in order to identify areas of weakness and to proactively manage safety in advance of an incident.

Leaders demonstrate that safety is their overriding value and priority and every employee feels empowered and recognized for making safe decisions. Everyone is aware of known hazards while remaining vigilant to new threats and employees feel encouraged to report safety hazards, including instances where they have committed an error and introduced a threat themselves. The organization continually learns from its own and others' experiences with the goal of advancing safety.

Regulators have a role to play in safety culture advancement as they can draw attention to the topic, raise awareness and understanding of cultural threats, look for signals of weakness and best practices and communicate them to industry to support learning. Equally, it is imperative that regulators recognize the importance of industry ownership in achieving and maintaining a robust safety culture. Collectively, regulator and industry efforts in this important area will support the development of innovative solutions that strengthen safety performance across the offshore petroleum sector.

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