

Best Practice #122

Best Practice: Peer Review Process

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Description: The EC Working Group Peer Review Process utilizes volunteer members of the EC Working Group to perform focused reviews on other EFCOG contractors and subcontractor members' noncompliance determination and reporting programs associated with the Price-Anderson Amendments Act (PAAA), Worker Safety and Health (WSH) and Security programs, utilizing a standard, defined set of criteria that is consistent with the expectations of the HSS Office of Enforcement and Oversight.

The objectives of the process are to:

- Provide assessments on behalf of the requesting organizations of the PAAA, WSH, and Security noncompliance determination and reporting programs utilizing Department of Energy published assessment criteria.
- Use the information gained from conducting the peer reviews to promote on-going improvements and lessons learned for contractor and Department of Energy organizations across the DOE complex.

A subgroup was established to administer the process. The duties of the subgroup are to coordinate/schedule the peer reviews, develop and maintain the Peer Review procedure and checklist(s); maintain the EFCOG Peer Review web page; report annually on the results and lessons learned associated with the Peer Review; and maintain a roster of qualified peer reviewers.

Why the best practice was used: The EC Working Group Peer Review Process was developed as a method for the contractor community to benefit from the experience and knowledge of their peers. It was originally constructed to mimic the program review process being performed by the DOE Office of Enforcement and Oversight. As such, it was also utilized as a method of preparing contractors for upcoming DOE program reviews. As the process evolved it became a potentially accepted alternative to the DOE program review.

What are the benefits of the best practice: The Peer Review Process promotes enhanced communication, lessons learned, and process improvement across the DOE complex in the area of noncompliance determination and reporting within the PAAA, WSH, and Security programs. In addition to helping the contractor receiving the review, the assessors themselves are provided benchmarking opportunities for possible improvements in their own programs. Additionally, the process was successful in providing an acceptable alternative, in some cases, to the DOE program reviews that were in place at the time.

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What problems/issues were associated with the best practice:

- Development of the checklist was time consuming and difficult to get consensus. However, it was well worth the effort as the end result provides a standard approach/method and facilitates more consistent, reliable results.
- Funding concerns for the reviewers is one of the primary barriers associated with this process. Early on the companies providing the reviewers supplied this service at their own expense. However, with the current budget concerns, it is more difficult to find the budget to finance these reviews.

How was the success of the Best Practice measured?

Each of the reviews was documented in a formal report that was transmitted to the contractor being assessed. If the contractor is agreeable, the assessment is then posted to the Enforcement Coordination Working Group Web page. At the regular working group meetings, recent Peer Reviews are presented and discussed.

Description of process experience using the Best Practice:

The Peer Review process has been a well-received tool by both the contractor community as well as the Office of Enforcement and Oversight. It has provided the contractors with a disciplined, documented approach to performing program reviews, sharing lessons learned and solutions to common problems, and performing benchmarking activities. It is also viewed as a valuable tool in preparing an organization for a regulatory assist visit. The activity itself is a prime example of the ISMS core function of Feedback and Improvement being promulgated between various DOE community contractors.

Program Documents and recent reviews can be accessed on the Enforcement Coordination Working Group web page; <http://www.efcoq.org/wg/ec/index.htm>