

WM2008 Conference Panel Reports

Session 02

Panel: Hot Topics in US DOE Environmental Management Senior DOE Managers Highlight Accomplishments, Challenges and Opportunities

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Top DOE managers continued to emphasize risk reduction, increased safety, becoming the Best in Class, and moving toward a high performance organization as major goals in the Environmental Management program.

Discussion of these goals in the context of several EM departments echoed and built upon remarks by James Rispoli, Assistant Secretary for EM, discussion during the opening plenary session.

As Deputy Assistant Secretary for Program Planning and Budget, Mark Frei focused his remarks on budget priorities and implications of a reduced budget in meeting those priorities. Risk reduction and safe operations is the top priority. However, EM must meet these clean-up priorities with a reduced budget. Since 2005, the EM budget has been reduced from a high of \$7.3 billion to \$5.5 billion requested for 2009. The office is looking toward a stable funding level that reduces risk while meeting full compliance.

Introduced as the director of future thinking, James Fiore, Director, Office of Management Analysis, discussed his organization and progress toward implementing recommendations from the NAPA review completed in December 2007. While results of the review were positive, recommendations were offered to strengthen project management through performance monitoring, improve planning and guidance in acquisition, increase staff in specified areas and better define roles and responsibilities. Implementing these improvements will put EM on a continuing path to a high performance organization.

Becoming the Best in Class was emphasized by John (Jack) Surash, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Acquisition and Project Management. A new protocol for EM clean-up recognizes the difference in clean-up programs by offering a near-term baseline and an out-planning phase. In other efforts to move toward becoming Best in Class, the office teamed with the Army Corps of Engineers to help with an assessment of both field and headquarters work. The result was assistance to the field with the addition of 50 professionals to support site work.

A new department of Standards and Quality Assurance was established in January as part of the Office of Safety Management and Operations. The new department was in response to the NAPA review, said Chuan Wu, Standards and QA manager. Among its emphasis is on quality of human capital in the field and at headquarters.

Steve Krahn, DOE Engineering and Technologies Program, focused on the value of collaboration—with national laboratories, private industry and business, and universities, in developing innovative technologies. Through technical exchanges, workshops and teleconferences, the office is sharing technical expertise and lessons learned. These external reviews and technology sharing supports reduction of risks and uncertainties, Krahn said.

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Panelists Frank Marcinowski, Office of Logistics and Waste Disposition, and Diane Cochran, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Human Capital, also emphasized Best in Class goals.

Frank Marcinowski emphasized zero tolerance for non-compliance with requirements and noted first priority is on-site disposition of waste.

Becoming a high performing workforce is the focus of Cochran's work in human capital. "Human capital is not human resources. It involves the recruitment of appropriate talent, development, including leadership development and employee retention."