

WM2009 Conference Panel Report

Session 14 Roundtable: Maintaining World-Class Safety during Times of Change

Panel Reporter: Judith D. Connell (Fluor Hanford)

The purpose of this roundtable was to share lessons learned and best practices in maintaining safe performance as contractors have transitioned work scope and workers. Handoffs between contractors are complex, and the technical and business aspects of turnovers can distract workers' and management's attention away from safety. Panelists represented the Department of Energy as well as executives from contractors that had recently experienced transitions.

The following individuals participated in the panel in the order presented:

- Kathy McCarty, Director, Office of Worker Safety & Health Enforcement, DOE EM/HQ
- Jeffrey M. Allison, DOE Manager for Savannah River (by phone)
- Dave Brockman, DOE Manager, Richland Operations, Hanford
- Lyden D. (Dave) Olson, Executive VP, Washington Savannah River Company
- John Lehew, President & CEO, CH2M HILL Plateau Remediation Company (Hanford)
- Anthony Umek, VP, ESH&Q, Savannah River Nuclear Solutions
- Peter Knollmeyer, Executive VP and Chief Operating Officer, Fluor Hanford.

Kathy McCarty started off the panel by acknowledging the issues that contractors face with transitions, adding that transitions also present challenges for enforcement. Ms. McCarty emphasized the importance of thorough due diligence and shared two very important points: liability for non-compliant conditions doesn't necessarily end at contract termination; declaration of a pre-existing condition does not automatically result in discretion or mitigation.

Jeff Allison discussed the goals for the Savannah River M&O transition and stressed the need for a disciplined approach and good communications. He enumerated lessons related to planning and execution, citing the importance of identifying the key risks during transition, assigning a dedicated core transition team, managing transition as a project, resolving critical issues early, understanding the role of facility reps, and paying attention to workforce morale.

Dave Brockman approached transition from a different perspective – noting that DOE must set clear expectations in the RFP and write them into the contracts –focusing more on nuclear safety than on industrial hazards. Learning from the past and collaborating were also emphasized, as he shared that he sent personnel to Savannah River to learn from the M&O contract transition.

Dave Olson focused his discussion on “beginning with the end in mind”: continue safe operations during AND after transition and make sure that everyone buys into the expectations. Like those that preceded him on the panel, he stressed the importance of learning from previous experience and communicating between contractors, and with DOE and employees.

John Lehew provided a detailed schedule and description of CH2M HILL's hand-off from Fluor Hanford. In echoing his co-panelists' thoughts on collaborating and communicating, he also pointed out that “transition doesn't end at the start of the contract.” There are processes that continue to change, as do expectations and conditions.

Building on Jeff Allison's emphasis on the importance of planning, **Tony Umek** began his presentation with saying that establishing "safety" as the number 1 priority from day one is essential: understand the goals of the client locally and at headquarters, collaborate with the other Site contractors, and establish challenging safety goals up front. Apply lessons learned...be accessible and open... and communicate... with the client, with the community, with the regulators, with the employees, with the stakeholders – it's the glue that holds everything together, keeping everyone focused on the same goals.

Pete Knollmeyer closed the session with explaining how Fluor Hanford prepared comprehensive briefing books for the incoming contractor that was assuming much of the project work that Fluor had been doing. He pointed that at Hanford, the RFPs and the contract for the incoming Plateau Remediation contractor had specific flow-down of nuclear safety requirements that must be met while multiple contractors are working in, and around, a nuclear facility. In fact, the requirements took the form of a Memorandum of Agreement signed by DOE. Verifying a contractor's readiness to assume the contract and begin is another new aspect of RFPs and contracts that is bringing added rigor to the transition process.