

WM2015 Conference Panel Report

PANEL SESSION 113: **Establishing and Sustaining a Reporting Culture Through a “Just” Environment**

Session Co-Chairs: **Jim Schildknecht**, *Lucas Engineering & Management Services*
Jan Preston, *Fluor, Paducah Deactivation Project*

Panel Reporter: **Judy Connell**, *Fluor*

Panelists:

- **Joe Estey**, *Manager, Safety Engineering and Training, Advanced Technologies and Laboratories (ATL);*
- **Stephen Varnell**, *Project Director, Fluor Power Services.*
- **Michael Hull**, *Manager, Technology Development, Luminant Power;*
- **Christopher Lloyd**, *AREVA Federal Services, Inc.; and*

Jim Schildknecht opened the session by introducing his co-chair Jan Preston and the four panelists. He also set the stage for discussion by describing a safety culture as **a set of behaviors, beliefs, norms, values, roles, and social and technical practices that are concerned with minimizing physical risk to assets, employees, customers, contractors, the public, and the environment.** Each of the panelists then went on to describe the value of a safety culture in their particular circumstances, the importance of a just culture that balances accountability with learning, and specific cases and applications from their corporate experience.

Summary of Presentations:

Joe Estey

Regardless of the services you provide, we all have the same problem: human performance. We wait for something to happen, experience the consequence, make the incident an example of an issue, and then label it “bad performance.” There are three reasons why things fail: Good reason (something sounds right), Convenient reason (something that is politically motivated), Real reason (actual condition someone is operating under). Basically, we have been “practicing” getting rid of human error since time began. Safety culture has three elements (many of which co-exist in the workplace): the written word, the spoken word, and what people see others do, which is a modelled behavior. In discussing a “just” culture, Estey emphasized that employees will report unsafe behavior/accidents only if they are treated fairly. A just culture balances accountability with learning. Almost all safety cultures start as “unjust,” confrontational environments referred to as Pathogenic. Gradually they move to a more responsive culture that learns from mistakes and finally to a sustainable safety culture where employees are personally invested and engaged.

Mike Hull

Hull began with some facts about Luminant Power: 4,300 employees; largest energy producer in Texas; 8th largest mining company in the U.S.; in its 5th year of its journey with Human Performance Improvement (HPI). Since embarking on HPI, they have seen a significant and continuing improvement in the impact of pre- and post-job briefs and a dramatic drop in the Total Recordable Injury rate. In fact, the company's Power Generation Group marked its safest year ever in 2014. As they moved through the maturation phases of HPI they transitioned through a reporting culture to an informed culture, a flexible culture, and finally a learning culture that engenders an atmosphere of trust where people are comfortable bringing forward safety issues. In the process, Luminant changed the way they investigate accidents – HPI professionals evaluate incidents rather than safety personnel. This does not imply a “get out of jail free” card. There can be disciplinary actions. However, the primary purpose of these investigations is to identify and fix the weaknesses in the organization.

Steve Varnell

Varnell focused on the One Team approach they have with Luminant Power. In speaking about the 30-year Fluor-Luminant relationship, he described the types of work Fluor performs for Luminant: crane and heavy rigging, working at heights and in confined spaces, hot work (e.g., welding, grinding). Varnell shared that not many people are coming to the industry now, so there are some significant challenges: an aging workforce, a workforce that often view HPI as just another flavor-of-the-day program, reluctance to change behaviors because “I’ve always done it this way.” He pointed out that 90% of safety events are related to human error: 70% can be attributed to latent organizational weaknesses and 30% are due to individual errors. To change the culture an organization must have top-level commitment, formal communications, targeted training, in-the-field coaching and mentoring – all in conjunction with internal practitioners.

Christopher Lloyd

Lloyd talked about what drives behavior in terms of one of Areva's products – the TRUPACT III transportation casks for transuranic waste. The cask had to undergo rigorous drop tests and met standards where compliance is absolute. However, the first package that was delivered to the Savannah River Site was non-compliant. He gave four reasons that created this situation:

1. The cost of the project had not been fully developed
2. The critical dimensions for the cask were not clearly identified
3. Lack of coordination among the staff overseeing this effort
4. Insufficient staff to review the design and product.

His parting message was “Own the work – regardless of whether or not you perform the work or it is done by a subcontractor.”