

WM2016 Conference Panel Report

PANEL SESSION 52: Improving Performance in the Field

Co-chairs: **Susan Cange, US DOE**
Betsy Child, Restoration Services, Inc.

Panel Reporter: **Ray Parrish, Restoration Services, Inc.**

Panelists:

1. **James Hutton, EM DAS for Safety, Security, and Quality Programs, US DOE**
2. **Chelsea Hubbard, Branch Chief Facilities Oversight, US DOE OREM**
3. **Karen Shears, Director, Procurement and Contracts Division, US DOE**
4. **Ron Slottke, Director, Project Services and Support, URS | CH2M Oak Ridge LLC**

This session focused on the “Purpose”. By improving the Safety Conscious Work Environment and ensuring safe operations, it exemplifies the purpose in the work of the Oak Ridge Environmental Management program (OREM). Also discussed were some new and effective ideas in contract execution and project management, giving purpose to performance excellence. Finally, a look at what is the perspective of the contractor on the federal oversight that is provided from DOE.

Summary of Presentations

James Hutton discussed ways to improve the Safety Conscious Work Environment at DOE sites. This is all about the culture that is developed. The values and behaviors of the workforce, instilled by management, and constantly pushed from all leadership. A work environment must be established where issues are brought forward. The organization must be strong; it is not possible to build a safety culture with weak organization. Everyone must be encouraged to question, identify, and fix problems to pursue a manner of excellence. The workforce should be able to question with no fear of retribution. Leadership must be available, accessible, and actively listen. Leaders must also provide all resources, training and tools needed to get the job done. Leaders will always shape the culture, for better or worse.

Chelsea Hubbard discussed the ways that DOE in Oak Ridge strives to pursue safe operations of their facilities. The first key is federal employee and contractor collaboration. This is the first step in ensuring a consistent focus on safety. This includes OREM Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) being on site with contractors. Additionally, facility representatives and Subject Matter Experts are intimately involved in projects. These individuals are given intensive training and education, including a rigorous qualification process and leadership training. These individuals maintain a consistent presence in the field. The Enhanced Oversight Model allows for additional resources to be deployed in problem areas.

Karen Shears discussed new approaches and ideas in contract and project management. This presentation shared several ideas that were key to success, and stressed that commitment to these is important. Tools that ensure success include: communication, continuous feedback, proper contract change management, and partnering. Integrated Project Teams allow for all members to provide status of upcoming actions and to discuss potential barriers to completion. Monthly Performance Reports allow for frank discussions on expectations and if they are being met.

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The feedback is both positive and includes any Opportunities for Improvement. The contractor will provide follow-up information on what corrective actions have been taken. Throughout all of these mechanisms, continuous feedback is key. Additionally, partnering is key to success. Partnering must be established early on, and you cannot begin the process as adversaries. This helps to establish organizational alignment and address problems as they arise. Other steps taken include improving up front planning for upcoming work, and incentivizing actions commensurate with the benefit they provide.

Ron Slottke discussed the contractor's perspective on federal oversight, which can at times seem burdensome, but ultimately leads to a successful project for all parties. Federal oversight includes regulatory oversight, technical oversight, and contractual oversight. For it to be successful, there must be a commitment to trust and partnering, especially in an environment that is constantly changing. The methods that DOE uses to provide oversight include: Organizational and operations alignment, alignment of programs, formal and informal project reviews, and focused discipline reviews. All of these have proven to increase performance. Both parties provide numerous and constant feedback which strengthens partnering. Also, it helps the contractor be a learning organization and improve performance. Ultimately, oversight and partnership go hand in hand. And oversight must be used as a means to improve.