

## WM2017 Conference Panel Report

### PANEL SESSION 5: Managing Safety Culture During Change

**Co-Chairs:**            **Jan Preston**, *Fluor Corporation*  
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**Panel Reporter:**    **Judy Connell**, *Fluor Corporation*

#### **Panelists**

1. **Matthew Moury**, *Associate Under Secretary for Environment, Health, Safety, and Security, US DOE*
2. **Rob De La Espriella**, *President, DLE Technical Services, LLC*
3. **Fred Hughes**, *Program Manager, Fluor Idaho, Fluor*
4. **Kevin Daniels**, *VP, Health, Safety, Security, Environment & Quality, Canadian Nuclear Laboratories*
5. **Chere Morgan**, *Director, Radiological Control, Idaho National Laboratory*

No one can deny that these are turbulent times – for our government, our nation, and the world. It seems everything is in a state of flux, constantly changing. But with this change comes opportunity to succeed...and sometimes to fail. This panel session focused on avoiding the pitfalls inherent in contract transitions that can compromise safety. Whether it was a transition that involved combining two contracts and two incumbent workforces at a site like Idaho, or changing from a government-owned-government operated to a government-owned-contractor operated contract such as Canadian Nuclear Laboratories (CNL), the message was still the same: changing or merging cultures is not easy, requires hard work, and takes time. In some instances “time” is counted in years rather than months. **Kevin Daniels**, VP of Health, Safety, Security, Environment & Quality at CNL shared that “it might take 3-5 years to effect the change.” He emphasized the value of taking the approach that “We are moving forward [as a team] rather than I think you need to change.” Idaho National Laboratory’s (INL) Director of Radiological Control **Chere Morgan** had a similar experience saying that everyone underestimated the difficulty of combining two laboratory cultures when Argonne National Laboratory (ANL) West and the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory (INEEL) were consolidated under the Battelle Energy Alliance in 2004. The operating premise, DOE oversight, employee size and focus, and past transition experience were all dramatically different. “The ANL employees felt they were disrespected and their accomplishments undervalued...and they hadn’t been through a transition in more than 40years. On the other hand INEEL had been managed by more than seven for-profit contractors over the same time period.” **Morgan’s** advice: treat staff with respect and be in a learning mode as you work toward implementation.

A consistent message was communicate often and consistently, not just in words but in actions. When **Fred Hughes**, Fluor Idaho’s Program Manager for the Idaho Cleanup Core Project, decided to close the site due to bad weather, the contract did not allow employees to be paid for that day away from work. Many workers were upset with this situation, responding that they would come to

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work regardless of the weather conditions. Remaining steadfast to his non-negotiable principles of safety first, **Hughes** decided to pay the employees for this day (a non-reimbursable cost) until potential contract changes could be identified and implemented. “Standing behind what you say shows employees that their safety is really important,” said **Kathleen Economy**, an Environmental Scientist with the EPA who attended the session. “I wasn’t going to attend this session, but I am really glad I did because what you have shared is so critical to everything we do.”

As a self-regulating agency, the Department of Energy has also embarked on a concentrated effort to improve safety. **Matthew Moury**, U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Associate Undersecretary for Environment, Health, Safety, and Security, gave attendees an overview of the Safety Culture Improvement Panel chartered in May 2015 to strengthen the implementation of safety culture and a safety-conscious work environment throughout DOE. The Panel, which includes representation from across DOE agencies and offices, has numerous objectives, but they are all focused on making safety a part of DOE’s DNA. “We need to sustain the momentum we’ve built and make a difference through meaningful products and getting the word out,” he said. “We can’t lose sight that we need strong safety management.”

Though **Rob De La Esprielle**, President of DLE Technical Services, admittedly has never personally been through a site contract transition, he has seen the unintended results that such change can produce. He pointed out common problems such as not capturing employee feedback; putting production over safety; failing to act by example; and not integrating standards that might confuse employees. **De La Esprielle** urged the audience to dig into the root causes of events, truly analyze the data you have, and use the resident knowledge to help assess the safety culture.

Summed up in just a few words, safety is never negotiable.