

# Chapter 6

## Communicating and Co-ordinating

If your organisation has information that someone else needs to reduce risk, your organisation must pass it on.

Whenever your organisation is working with others on one change, they must co-ordinate their ESM activities.

### 6.1 Guidance from volume 1

Safety-related information may include problems you find in someone else's work, or assumptions about someone else's work which are important to safety. Your organisation should pass on any relevant information about hazards and safety requirements to its suppliers.

There are specific legal obligations in the area of co-ordinating activities, for instance regulation 9 of the *'Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992'*.

### 6.2 Background

Safety issues do not respect organisational boundaries. Effective communications and co-ordination are often needed to resolve them.

The responsibility to pass on information or to co-ordinate activities with others is a legal duty in certain circumstances. See volume 1 for further details.

Railway Group Standards bring obligations on those involved in the UK mainline railway to share information:

- Group Standard GM/RT2250, *'Safety Performance Monitoring and Defect Reporting of Rail Vehicles and Plant and Machinery'* requires Railway Group members to submit reports of safety-related defects to a centralised repository, managed by Railtrack, and to share details of safety-related defects with other members of the Railway Group.

The Engineering Council '*Code of Professional Practice on Risk Issues*' also places a professional obligation on all engineers to:

'Communicate effectively with colleagues, both up and down the chain of responsibility, to help ensure that risk management activities are sufficiently comprehensive and understood.

'Endeavour to raise awareness of potential hazards and risk issues among your colleagues.

'Seek to ensure that all those involved with a project are aware of any risks to which they may be exposed, of any relevant limitations inherent in the design or operating procedures, and of any implications for their conduct.

'Discuss the reasons for incidents and near misses with your colleagues, so that lessons can be learned.'

This chapter is written for:

- managers and engineers who have safety-related information that is required by someone else or who need to work or liaise with others in the interest of safety.

### 6.3 What to communicate

Your organisation should make arrangements to pass on the following sorts of safety-related information to people who need it to reduce risk:

- hazards, risk and arrangements to control them;
- limitations on the products and systems that your organisation makes and any implications for users and maintainers;
- lessons learned, relating to safety; and
- safety-related information about your products, principally to your customers.

In particular, you should make sure that any of your suppliers who are doing safety-related work have all relevant information regarding:

- hazard identification and risk assessments that you have carried out;
- strategies that you have defined to control risk; and
- safety requirements that you have established.

If any of this information changes, then you should make sure that you inform your suppliers of the change promptly.

If one of your suppliers tells you about a safety issue that other suppliers should be aware of then you should pass the information on.

Your organisation should put in place arrangements to capture and record this sort of information, to decide who should receive it, and to make sure that they do receive it.

## 6.4 Communication within your organisation

There will probably need to be several different processes for communicating different sorts of information. Do not feel restricted to using formal documents (such as memoranda, user manuals, Safety Case, Hazard Log). You may find it effective to communicate information by:

- face-to-face briefings,
- informal documents (such as newsletters, bulletins, electronic mail),
- audio-visual packages,
- training.

Whatever method you choose, you should make sure that it is auditable.

## 6.5 Communication between organisations

Initially it is usually a good idea to pass information on verbally, so that misunderstandings can be quickly resolved. However communication of safety-related information should be done auditably, so it should be confirmed in writing afterwards.

Considerations of commercial confidence and the expense of providing certain classes of information can make passing necessary information around slow and expensive. To avoid this happening, it is often a good idea to enter into non-disclosure agreements and to agree who will pay for what at the outset of any partnership.

## 6.6 Co-ordinating under normal conditions

Cross-organisation working groups with a focus on safety are commonly set up in military projects (see DEF-STAN 00-56 [Error! Cannot open file.] and MIL-STD 882C [Error! Cannot open file.]).

If several organisations are involved in a project then the lead organisation should set up such a working group and involve all other interested parties including users, maintainers and suppliers.

The working group should be given clear terms of reference. It should have the authority to resolve straightforward issues directly, but will need to escalate issues which have a complexity outside its scope, or which are outside its authority (often where significant, unplanned resources need to be expended).

It can be useful to maintain a database of safety issues and to track their resolution.

All co-ordination arrangements should be put in writing so that they can be audited.

## 6.7 Co-ordinating under emergency conditions

If your organisation potentially has to deal with an accident or emergency, then it should have contingency plans in place to co-ordinate responses with others to do this:

- your organisation will need to have arranged, in advance, lines of communication and control and have set up dedicated communications facilities (such as land lines or radio communications);
- your organisation should have agreed arrangements in place for dealing with emergency services and for communicating with the general public and the media; and
- your organisation may wish to set up joint exercises with the people you will have to deal with, if there is the realistic possibility that you may have to deal with a catastrophic incident.

## 6.8 Related guidance

Chapter 2 provides guidance on the transfer of responsibilities. There are requirements for making sure that whoever takes on responsibility is properly informed.