Safety Corner

What is Safety Validation of Organisational Change?

Most safety management system (SMS) contain an element that requires an organisational structure to assure the commitments to safety and health in a work place, and an element that requires a hazard or risk control programme to identify the risks to a system and its workers. However, the COP and the implementation guides of these SMS often do not tell you what to do when there is a change in the organisation.

Organisation is part of a system. Thus, the hazard or risk control programme should also be applied to changes in safety organisation. In more sophisticated SMS, there would be a requirement for systems in place to ensure that the risks associated with any changes to organisational structures that could affect safe operations are properly identified and assessed, and that control measures are in place to reduce any consequent risks to a level that is at least the same or better than the original risk existed prior to the implementation of the organisational change. Usually, a change management plan based on the results of the assessment would be developed before the planned organisational change to control the risks of the change. This process is called the Safety Validation of Organisational Change.

The validation should be conducted by a Safety Validation Panel whose members are quipped with specified competencies, knowledge, and experience to meet the requirements and objectives of the safety validation process. For complex organisational changes where there may be conflicts of interest, or the proposed change is associated with a high degree of safety risk, an independent input would be necessary as an added assurance that the process has been correctly and adequately applied.

Organisation is part of a system. The same safety validation process introduced above should be applied to all change initiatives to the hardware or software of a system that can have the potential to affect safety operation of the system. No change should be introduced before the safety validation process is complete and approved.