UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
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September 4, 2019

MEMORANDUM TO: Division of Inspection and Regional Support

FROM: Christopher G. Miller, Director */RA/*
          Division of Inspection and Regional Support
          Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

SUBJECT: DIRS SAFETY CULTURE COMBINED ACTION PLAN FOR
             FEDERAL EMPLOYEE VIEWPOINT SURVEY RESULTS

Data from Federal Employee Viewpoint Surveys (FEVS) going back to 2015 identify several areas for improvement. To address these areas, the Division of Inspection and Regional Support (DIRS) Safety Culture Team (SCT) developed mitigating actions to be accomplished by division management and the branch chiefs. These actions are listed on the attached Action Plan.

Recent FEVS data, from 2017 to 2018, show DIRS improvement in cooperation (25% increase), and in knowledge and skills among staff (14% increase). However, this same data also showed DIRS areas for improvement: feeling encouraged to innovate (14% decrease), and a reasonable workload (24% decrease).

In 2019, the DIRS SCT conducted branch-specific focus groups to determine perceptions of safety culture that led to these results. Actions were developed from results of the 2018 FEVS and the focus group activities conducted with each branch. These actions were added to the previous Action Plan, which was developed in 2016. The observations and themes from those focus group activities were presented to DIRS management and discussed during a management and branch chief retreat in early 2019. This discussion identified three high-level areas for improvement.

- Decision-Making – Focus group responses indicated a perception that decisions were made both without adequate staff involvement and with too much pressure from outside DIRS
- Recognition – Staff satisfaction could be improved with simple steps to communicate management appreciation and recognition of staff efforts
- Workload management – Responses across branches indicated that staff felt innovation was discouraged in practice because of inefficient prioritization and the inability to shed work as new work emerged

This combined Action Plan captures each of those areas for improvement and recommends actions that DIRS management take in addressing each area. Pending receipt of the 2019

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FEVS data, anticipated in October, division staff members who want to communicate issues or concerns can contact SCT members directly or complete a suggestion form for deposit into the DIRS SCT Suggestion Box located by the coffee maker to the left of the sink in the 13th floor kitchen. Suggestion forms are located with the Suggestion Box.

Enclosure:
DIRS Safety Culture Combined Action Plan

SUBJECT: DIRS SAFETY CULTURE COMBINED ACTION PLAN FOR
FEDERAL EMPLOYEE VIEWPOINT SURVEY RESULTS
DATED SEPTEMBER 4, 2019

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DIRS Safety Culture Action Plan, August 2019

What is the specific goal?	What actions are needed? (NRC Values in Bold)	What is start and end date?	What are the resource needs?	How will the goal be measured?
1.Improve Supervisor Employee Relationships *Question(s):* *1. Regarding suggestions for change from employees, my supervisor is usually receptive (OIG)/My supervisor listens to what I have to say. (FEVS)* *2. Contrasting views are openly discussed in reaching decisions in my work unit. (OIG)* *3. In my judgment, the following are well managed: My work unit (OIG)* *4. My supervisor treats me with respect. (FEVS)* *5. Overall, how good a job do you feel is being done by your immediate supervisor? (FEVS)* *6. Supervisors in my work unit support employee development. (FEVS)*	**Cooperation, Respect, Service, Openness/Communication** *1)Emphasize 2-way/360 feedback during appraisals, and throughout the year (DIRS FO)* *2)Establish expectations for BC open door time (DIRS FO)* *3)Set up recurring Safety Culture team meetings that allow staff to voice concerns to the team (DIRS SCT)* *4)Set up SharePoint and physical suggestion/concerns box (DIRS SCT)* *5) Encourage and execute team building activities (DIRS FO, SCT)*	*- October 2016, and ongoing*	*1,2) Front office commitment* *1,2) Branch chiefs' time* *4,5) Safety culture team time to plan team building activities*	*Possible short survey after performance appraisals*
2. Foster Collaborative Environment *Question(s):* *-The people I work with cooperate to get the job done (OIG)* *-In my experience, there is good cooperation between headquarters and the regions (OIG)*	**Cooperation, Respect, Service** *1) Enrich interactions with other divisions (team building, etc.)* *2) Increase regional/DIRS staff interaction through HQ participation in counterparts, inspections* *3) Increase DIRS interaction with regional staff when visiting HQ (e.g., for training, meetings)*	*On going*	*1) Safety culture team's and some staffs' time* *2) Budget for travel*	*Query staff for feedback during Bimonthly branch/DD meeting, Safety culture team meeting, and possibly short surveys*

3. Strengthen Safety and Quality Focus *Question(s):* *-We too often sacrifice the quality of our work in order to meet established Metrics (OIG)* *- We too often sacrifice the quality of our work in order to meet personal or political need (OIG 2012)*	**Excellence, Commitment, Cooperation, Openness/Communication, Integrity** *1) Leadership discuss with division to establish prioritization:* *-Are the dates sent to the staff in a timely manner?* *-Are the dates realistic?* *-Given multiple priorities are items being prioritized appropriately?* *-Can the due dates be changed?* *2) DIRS FO needs to consider how ADHOC requests affect the staff's daily work and prioritization. Consult with staff prior to committing resources (obviously sometimes this cannot be done).* *3) FO/BCs need to ensure the right staff working the projects/questions.* *-Get rid of the middle man. This can drag things on unnecessarily.* *2) DIRS FO – are we working to a 'metric'? This is not what the NRR FO expects of us.* *-Can the metric be missed? Maybe the right answer is the metric should be missed to help ID where a problem might be.* *3) Leadership needs to ensure the staff knows how much effort to put into a project. Communicate with the BC's and staff.* *-Maybe these projects don't need to be of the highest quality but maybe they do.*	*On going*	*1) DIRS FO, BC and TA. Possibly NRR and other offices depending on the issue.* *2) SCT members/meetings*	*1) Asking staff if due dates are reasonable.* *-Asking the staff if due dates were adjusted.* *-Asking the staff if leadership gave clear guidance on how much effort to expend on the project.* *2) SC FBFs*
4. Continuous Improvement *(Overlapping with Agency/NRR Action Plans)* *Questions:* *- I feel significant actions have been taken as a result of the previous Safety Culture and Climate Survey. (OIG)*	**Openness/Communication, Excellence** *1) SCT set up charter, reoccurring meetings with the staff to discuss Safety Culture items; update, revise, add/delete items, and clarify issues; include the staff in the safety culture improvement process.* *2) SCT communicate with DIRS FO on issues that need to be addressed at their level. Make recommendations to them, document actions, and communicate back to the staff as appropriate.* *3)* *Note: Coordinate effort with NRR Plan.*	*On going*	*1) DIRS FO and SCT*	*1) Next safety culture survey* *-possibly an office safety culture survey* *2) FO engaging and talking to the staff* *3) SCT FBFs*

5. OCWE *(Overlapping with Agency/NRR Action Plans)* *- Regarding the Differing Professional Opinions [DPO] Program and Non-Concurrence Process: It has no negative effect on career development at the NRC (OIG)*	**Excellence, Commitment, Cooperation, Openness/Communication, Respect** *1) Training on DPO, NCP, OD policy – Ask senior manager(s) to talk to us about their DPO/NC experience briefly.* *2) ET/LT need to exam where this idea is coming from and, regardless off the validity of it, address the origin and underling issues. Why does the staff think this (if it is true or not true)? Did ET/LT level action play a part in this belief?* *Note: Coordinate effort with NRR/NRC Action Plans*	*On going*	*1) DIRS FO, BC and TA. Possibly NRR and other offices depending on the issue.* *2) SCT members/meetings*	*1) Next safety culture survey* *-possibly an office safety culture survey*
6. Decisions that are consistent, clearly communicated, and well-founded. *Decisions are required in situations of varying complexity, data availability, timeliness, and consequence. The actions described apply to those major decisions as made and determined by a BC (e.g., the GFE process) or by division management.*	**Integrity, Service, Openness, Cooperation, Excellence** *A decision-making process for major decisions consists of the following, depending on the impact and complexity of that decision.* *1. Define the problem;* *2. communicate the decision-making process to stakeholders to inform them of the issue and the planned resolution;* *3. decide a well-founded end-point;* *4. determine the drivers for change (e.g., budget, internal or external requirements, regions, Commission, etc.) and weighs their relevance and accuracy;* *5. generate and evaluate alternative solutions;* *6. develop a position (the nascent decision);* *7. generate consensus (mini-decisions) and modify the position, as needed; then* *8. communicate that final decision, with a review of how the decision was made.* *Develop a DIRS management meeting agenda item to ask the following.* *1. Is a decision required?* *2. What decision-making process is to be used?*	*Start immediately after distribution of this Action Plan.* *On-going.*	*Division management commitment and support* *BCs and staff time*	*Internal and external feedback. Staff, BCs, and managers are encouraged to discuss and to provide feedback.* *Informal survey by SCT after 6-9 months.*

7. Employees who feel recognized in a personally satisfactory way. *In addition to current practice of formal award presentations, etc. Staff preference is key.*	**Integrity, Service, Commitment, Cooperation, Respect** *BCs are in the best position to determine the recognition preferences of each staff member, as different people respond differently to the various recognition and rewards. BCs can perform a short email or verbal survey after mid-year or performance appraisals, or at another convenient time.* *1. Monetary rewards (probably the most popular).* *2. Free or low-cost rewards (small, but more timely and focused, e.g. letters or handwritten notes from management/EDO/Commissioner; flowers or food arrangement; gift card for store/restaurant/film; OD/DD drop-by; branch meeting recognition; etc.) (Regions are already doing this).* *3. Time off.* *Develop a DIRS management meeting agenda item to ask the following.* *1. Is any staff to be recognized this week?* *2. What form will the recognition take (i.e., at what level is recognition planned)?*	*Start immediately after distribution of this Action Plan.* *On-going.*	*Division management commitment and support.* *BCs time*	*Informal survey by SCT after 6-9 months.*
8. Workload priorities that are realistically established, periodically re-evaluated, and clearly communicated to internal and external stakeholders.	**Openness, Commitment, Cooperation, Excellence, Respect** *1. BCs establish a team, as appropriate, to initiate project.* *2. BCs establish realistic priorities list, with dates, for DIRS.* *3. BCs post priority list publicly.* *4. Review incoming tasks and re-establish priorities monthly (vice assign top priority to each new incoming task).* *5. BC/DD update priorities and provide staff feedback quarterly.* *Develop a DIRS management meeting agenda item to ask the following.* *1. Are staff workloads stable? Realistic? Progressing?* *2. Coordinate/allocate staff workloads as appropriate.*	*Start immediately after distribution of this Action Plan.* *On-going.*	*Division management and BC commitment* *Division management and BCs time*	*BC to determine the following examples of workload information from staff feedback.* *1. Are milestone dates are reasonable?* *2. Do milestone dates need adjustment?* *3. Is there clear guidance on level of effort to expend.* *4. What interferes with priority work?* *Informal survey by SCT after 6-9 months.*