

### What and Why

Safety Culture is not easily defined but can be described as “The way that we do things around here” when we think about safety.

Safety culture can be positive or negative and is a result of the level of importance that people working in an organisation put on safety. A positive safety culture will result when the majority of people have strong safety beliefs, values and attitudes. A negative culture will result when this is not the case.

A strong positive safety culture is usually led from the top and this results from strong leadership and the commitment from senior roles and has some key components:

- Focus on safety leadership and commitment;
- Role of managers in safety
- Consultation and communication with all persons who are impacted by safety;
- Encouraging open and honest communication and feedback without recourse;
- Actively considering the behaviour of people and the impacts of those behaviours (human factors);
- Seeking and recognising opportunities for safety improvement, and
- A willingness to devote resources to safety.

Safety culture is only one component of a SMS but underpins and reinforces the necessary behaviours of everyone who works in the organisation. Without a positive safety culture, the SMS will become ineffective, and incidents and accidents will increase.

### How

Safety culture can be hard to measure, although some larger more complex operators use specialist culture surveys.

Safety culture can be demonstrated through a number of consistent actions – how things are done, rather than what is done.

Examples could include:

- Constant awareness and recognition of opportunities to improve safety at safety meeting, volunteer briefings, tool box talks etc.;
- Senior management roles ‘walking the talk’;
- A demonstrated commitment by all at the organisation that safety is everyone’s responsibility regardless of their role or position;
- Safety boards have copies of safety policies countersigned by the majority of members/rail safety workers;
- Responsible persons checking that there has been a response to incidents reported;
- Volunteers, contractors, visitors and employees are all treated the same with respect to safety;
- There is open communication at the organization;

- There is a genuine “just culture” (i.e. one which recognises that mistakes can and will be made, but that processes must be tolerant of those errors – either preventing them or limiting their consequences). A response to an incident should focus on how the railway’s systems allowed the mistake to occur NOT on the individual who made the mistake). NOTE: This does not preclude each individual’s responsibility with due diligence. Recklessness is not excused under a just culture and the individual would be held accountable for their actions.
- People take opportunities to improve safety (e.g. changes to safety procedures to increase safety are proposed and accepted);
- Safety concerns of people are recorded, acknowledged, acted on, and closed-out and monitored by responsible persons;
- A willingness to invest in safety, for example, personal protective equipment (PPE) is provided to all workers with the strict requirement that it is to be worn onsite;
- Dedicated safety roles are created;
- Genuine effort by all levels of the operations to report all incidents & near hits/misses;
- All notifiable occurrences as defined in the Rail Safety National Law are reported to ONRSR;
- Inductions for new starters includes a dedicated section on safety to set the benchmark for safety culture from the start;
- Volunteers or others who continually behave in an unsafe manner are no longer welcomed by the operator;
- People across the operations at various levels confirm that the organisation openly encourages safety feedback from all levels and issues can be reported without retribution.

## Who

Safety is everyone’s responsibility.

The Executive Committee/ Board will set the agenda and make decisions in the interests of the organisation, but with a considered approach to safety.

As the most senior group, the Executive Committee/ Board may wish to sign off on these procedures as part of their governance processes.

Managers and supervisors all demonstrate their commitment to safety by complying with the SMS and showing safety leadership at all times.

All rail safety workers, volunteers, contractors and visitors all actively contribute to safety improvement, encourage safe behaviour and report all incidents and occurrences in a timely manner.

## When

Safety culture is a measure of behaviour and attitude and is aligned with cultural values and beliefs. A consistent commitment to safety should be a priority for everyone who works in the organisation, regardless of their role.

### List of relevant documents (internal)

All SMS Elements

Notifiable Occurrences reporting procedures

Incident Investigation procedures

### Links (external)

[ONRSR Website – The ONRSR Way](#)

[ONRSR Website – Guideline - Small isolated line heritage operations – Safety Management System \(SMS\)](#)

[ONRSR Website – Guideline - Safety Management System](#)

[ONRSR Website – Rail Safety National Law](#)

### Appendices

None