FAQ SHEET

COMPETENCY MANAGEMENT FOR PROCESS SAFETY

Acronyms and Abbreviations Used

CMS   -   Competency Management System

What is meant by competency?

Competency means that people are suitably qualified, experienced and capable for roles and responsibilities and associated work activities and tasks. In other words, their performance will not be limited by a lack of qualifications, experience or capability.

Competency involves much more than technical training and includes attitude and behavior as well as relevant experience and knowledge.

What is competency management?

Competency management means that appropriate policies, procedures and practices are established to ensure people are competent for the tasks they perform.

Why is competency management important?

Competency plays an important role in ensuring safety because people are involved at all stages of the process life cycle and any mistakes they make can result in accidents. Human error is a major cause of accidents and assuring competency is a minimum requirement for reducing human errors. Competency is vital in abnormal and emergency situations. The achievement of tolerable process risk depends on individual and team competency.

Why the focus on competency management now?

Ever newer technologies are being adopted by companies at an increasing rate. New technologies require new skills of the people using them. Company personnel must acquire these skills before they use the technologies. Even if new people who possess these skills are hired, they will be unfamiliar with the organizational and safety culture in which they must be used.

Furthermore, in today's world there is frequent movement of people between roles, between companies, and even across industries. People have less opportunity to hone their skills on the job, and managers are less familiar with the capabilities of their personnel.

International standards have recognized the importance of competency, for example, the standard on functional safety, IEC 61508.

How can competency management be addressed?

Companies need to establish a Competency Management Systems (CMS) in order to satisfy themselves, their customers, and regulators that their personnel are competent for the tasks to which they are assigned.

What is a competency management system (CMS)?

A CMS is a process involving appropriate policies, procedures and practices designed to develop, measure, maintain and continually improve the competency of personnel within an organization.

The size of an organization will affect the necessary extent and formality of its CMS. In general, the effort expended in competency management should be commensurate with that required for other safety management activities.

What is the purpose of a CMS?

A CMS helps to ensure that all people within its scope are suitably qualified, experienced, and capable for their work activities and tasks.

A competency management system should enable employees to fulfill responsibilities and to perform activities to recognized standards of competency in order to reduce risks, satisfy legal and regulatory requirements, meet the organization's business objectives, and enable the organization to meet contractual commitments.

How do I set up a CMS?

As for any management system, first obtain top management's commitment. Determine and define the scope of the CMS. Evaluate all skills and knowledge needed within the organization to safely operate the process. Understand that the organization's collective

skills and knowledge reside in its people; thus not everyone needs to be an expert. Some employees may need to be licensed professionals, some may need to be certified by third parties, and others may be judged competent by their supervisors.

Develop appropriate metrics to measure the current level of competency. Any gaps that exist between the organization's competency and the necessary level of competency needed to safety operate the process may be filled by adding new personnel and / or conducting formal or informal training of existing personnel. Implement an auditing process which looks for non-conformities to the policies and procedures used to manage competency.

All companies should periodically review their arrangements and achievements in managing competency, and implement improvements as required, so their CMS is continually improved to assure an effective and consistent standard of competency in individuals and teams.

How can I get more information?

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