

National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Office of the Administrator
Washington, DC 20546-0001



April 27, 2009

Vice Admiral Joseph W. Dyer, USN (Ret.)
Chairman
Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Washington, DC 20546

Dear Admiral Dyer:

Enclosed is NASA's response to Recommendation 2008-04-05/NASA Center Executive Safety Committee from the 2008 Fourth Quarterly Meeting of the Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel (ASAP). Please do not hesitate to contact me if the Panel would like further background on the information provided in the enclosure.

I look forward to receiving continued advice from the ASAP that results from your important fact-finding and quarterly meetings.

Sincerely,


Christopher J. Scolese
Acting Administrator

Enclosure

Tracking Number 2008-04-05
NASA Center Executive Safety Committee

Recommendation

The ASAP recommends that the Executive Safety Committee (ESC) at each NASA Center ensure that the Center Director is fully informed about ESC activities and conclusions.

NASA Response

NASA agrees with ASAP Recommendation 2008-04-05. NASA has mandated the establishment and operation of ESCs in two NASA directives. These requirements are an outgrowth from NASA Handbook requirements of the 1990s and constitute NASA's implementation of 29 CFR, Part 1960.36 a/b and of world-class best practice. They are:

NPR 8715.1 paragraphs 5.1, 5.3, and 5.4:

5.1 General

Under provisions of the Basic Program Elements for Federal Employee Occupational Safety and Health Programs (29 CFR, Part 1960), agencies are given certain options regarding the use of safety and health committees. NASA has chosen not to implement committees certifiable under these regulations; however, NASA will continue to require the basic safety and health committee concept for Centers as outlined in paragraph 5.3 and 5.4 below.

5.3 Center Executive Safety and Health Board or Equivalent

This committee will be established at each Center. The NASA Center Director or a designee will be the chairperson. Meetings will be scheduled at least semiannually and more often where conditions indicate a need. The purpose of this committee is to provide a forum for meaningful discussion of, and a channel for input to, management's decisions relative to occupational safety and health matters. For these reasons, membership should be broad based and will include representatives of both management and employees. Safety and health, as well as other technical personnel, should be either full members or advisors to the committee and should attend meetings. Agendas shall be prepared in advance and minutes kept and distributed to participants (Requirement 22065). Each committee recommendation shall receive a formal response from management, within 30 days of receipt, as to the disposition of the recommendations and be incorporated in the minutes of subsequent meetings (Requirement 31587). Copies of minutes shall be kept on file for review by Headquarters safety and health offices (Requirement 31588).

5.4 Subordinate Safety and Health Committees

Special safety and health committees may be formed on an ad hoc or continuing basis in accordance with 29 CFR, Part 1960.38 to assist the NASA Center or Component Facility safety and health officials in dealing with particular programs, projects, geographical areas, or special operations. Committee members chosen for this assignment must receive safety or health training as required (Requirement 22066). NASA Centers or Component Facilities are also encouraged to form supervisor- and employee-level safety committees to assist in the implementation of the safety and health programs. Written

minutes of each committee meeting shall be maintained and distributed per 29 CFR 1960.37 (Requirement 31589).

NPR 8715.3C paragraph 1.12.1.a:

1.12.1 Center Directors shall provide or make accessible to the Office of Safety and Mission Assurance (OSMA) (through an internet web site):

a. Center executive safety committee or board documentation (e.g., minutes and reports) (Requirement 31904).

NASA's ESC requirements include both the requirement for the ESC to advise management and the requirement for management to respond, in a timely manner and in writing, to ESC recommendations.

In order to provide the Panel with insight on the level of implementation of the above ESC requirements at the NASA Centers, the NASA Headquarters OSMA surveyed the ten NASA Center Safety and Mission Assurance (SMA) Offices. OSMA found that seven of NASA's ten Centers have ESCs. Of the seven Center ESCs:

- Five are charted via a Center-level policy document.
- Four appear to have good coverage across the Center activities.
- Five are chaired either by the Center Director or their Deputy with immediate briefings to the Center Director, two are chaired by other senior officials who brief the Center Director within a week of significant safety concerns.
- Three meet monthly, one meets eight times a year, one meets bimonthly, and two meet three times a year.
- Six post their ESC minutes on a Center-wide web site, and the other Centers maintain them in the Center Director's office. The minutes from each of these six ESCs are available for Headquarters review as required.
- All seven appear to have good ESC programs, but Ames Research Center and Langley Research Center have outstanding programs.

The Office of the Chief Health and Medical Officer conducts Center reviews to assess the implementation of requirements in NPR 8715.1. OSMA will add compliance with ESC requirements to the audit lists for future audits in order to check that the ESC function is being performed according to the aforementioned requirements. This recommendation, as well as other recommendations from ASAP, was discussed at the recently held meeting of the Agency's Safety and Mission Assurance Directors.

NASA understands that world-class safety programs have Executive Committees to advise the executive leadership on their mishap prevention status and the needed actions to prevent injury and loss of life and property. The Federal safety and health program, specified by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), levies the basic requirement for establishing such a committee. To assure greater compliance with known best practice and OSHA policy relative to ESC, NASA will draft a letter reminding organizational leadership that

ESCs are an important part of our mishap prevention program and will provide explicit criteria for measuring conformance to the NASA established policy.