

CONF-8710184--2

GENERAL EMPLOYEE TRAINING: INITIAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Edith Jones and Emily D. Copenhaver
Technical Resources and Training Program
Environmental Compliance and Health Protection Division
Oak Ridge National Laboratory*
Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37831-6103

ABSTRACT

U.S. Department of Energy Orders, including those for Emergency Preparedness, require that DOE facility employees receive a preparatory course on certain basic work practices and employee responsibilities before receiving any job-specific training. Most of this general information is required for employees to either prevent or to handle emergency situations that may arise in the workplace. While the categories are general, the information should be given at both Laboratory and individual-site levels, if possible. A simple checklist developed by Oak Ridge National Laboratory proved beneficial when assessing its general employee orientation compliance status. The checklist includes subject areas covered, organizational identities and responsibilities, and documentation needs.

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INTRODUCTION

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Several DOE Orders including those for Emergency Preparedness¹ require that DOE facility employees receive a preparatory course on certain basic work practices and employee responsibilities before progressing to job-specific training and, where needed, technical qualification/certification. Typical subjects² include:

- General emergency preparedness (emergency plan)
- Basic criticality control
- Radiation safety and contamination control practices
- Industrial safety, including hazardous material control
- Facility physical security
- Quality assurance/control
- Fire prevention/response
- Facility operations
- Company policy and administration

*Operated by Martin Marietta Energy Systems, Inc., for the U.S. Department of Energy under Contract No. DE-AC05-84OR21400.

¹U.S. Department of Energy Orders 5480.5, 5500.2, 5500.3, 5481.1B, and 5480.2.

²U.S. Department of Energy, Guidelines for Evaluating DOE Non-Reactor Nuclear Facility Training Programs, November 1985.

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- Plant layout
- Management personnel

General Employee Training (GET) supplements job-specific training and is the initial step in providing a solid performance base to assure that each worker can effectively perform his/her assigned tasks without undue risk to themselves, co-workers, or the environment. Though it is more general than the job-specific training, GET should share a performance-based approach that requires any training to have applicability to the duties and responsibilities of the workers.³ Many facilities have long had an orientation program for new employees. However, many may have not had a systematic program that addresses all of the above subject areas and even fewer have always maintained rigorous documentation of the type and date of training given. Fewer still have retrained their employee within the two-year cycle now required by DOE orders or regulations.

In an emergency preparedness audit in the mid-1980s, a more comprehensive GET program was recommended for Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL). To review ORNL's standing with regard to compliance with these GET requirements in the paper, we have prepared a GET Needs Assessment Checklist (Table 1) that briefly outlines the steps taken to assess our compliance status. The Checklist touches upon each of the subject areas required. During the assessment of our comprehensive general employee training program, we found that too little information was being provided in some areas; and too much information not directly related to general work assignments and related employee responsibilities in other areas.

REVIEW OF ORNL'S GENERAL EMPLOYEE TRAINING NEEDS

A comprehensive GET program should include clearly defined organizational structure, address job-related information, be kept up to date, and have the appropriate level of content for the audience. The following includes some general observations on our findings prior to developing a more comprehensive general employee training program as recommended by DOE.

REVIEW OF EXISTING ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND PROGRAMS

In order to have a comprehensive GET, it is necessary to have in place at the facility well-established organizations dealing with the subject areas to be covered: Emergency Preparedness, Radiation Protection, Industrial Hygiene, Safety, Health, and Environmental Protection. In our survey all these organizations

³Institute of Nuclear Power Operations, Guidelines for General Employee Training, February 1982.

existed at ORNL, and there was only a need to clarify their areas of responsibility.

RELATIONSHIP OF PROGRAM TO JOB

A general employee orientation program must also cover the subject areas listed above in a manner that relates them to the worker's own job responsibilities. The program must also be carefully documented. In our initial assessment of the orientation program ORNL was providing its new employees, we frequently found that too much information was being covered, limiting retention of key concepts and contacts. Much of the material went beyond the needs of the majority of ORNL's employees who did not routinely come into contact with either radiation or hazardous materials in their jobs.

MAINTENANCE OF ORIENTATION PROGRAM

Documentation of the original orientation program consisted of only sign-up sheets, with no method of verifying the information really important for the workers to retain. Training must be provided, updated, and documented by some training or organizational entity. The first-level General Employee Training deals with the Laboratory-level information and was first given within each ORNL organization by the Safety Officer. All new employees now receive the training during the ORNL New Employee Orientation Program. At ORNL, we are using several training organizations in our current effort, but there is one General Employee Training Coordinator to provide overall oversight of the program.

LEVELS OF PROGRAM CONTENT

It was necessary to identify the appropriate level of information to be presented on each of the required subject areas. This included:

- Radiation hazards, effects, risks, and control
- Hazardous material recognition, effects, and control
- Good work practices and on-the-job safety
- Emergency response, evacuation, fire and health protection

In addition, it was necessary to carefully identify the proper personnel to handle employee questions and concerns in each of the above areas and to identify how the workers could reach responsible personnel in those areas. However, it was equally important to make the individual worker aware of his/her own responsibilities in these areas--to be aware of potential hazards, work safely, behave responsibly, and report all unusual occurrences or problems.

SUMMARY

Use of a tool, such as the Needs Assessment Checklist, can assist in the identification of needs for your organization's existing employee orientation or GET program. The Checklist includes subject areas covered, organizational identities and responsibilities, and documentation needs. Most of this general information is required for employees to either prevent or to handle emergency situations that may arise in the workplace. While the categories are general, the information should be given at both Laboratory and individual-site levels, if possible. The ORNL survey found that many of the needs identified were not unique to the training efforts alone but often were products of complex management structures.

TABLE 1. GENERAL EMPLOYEE TRAINING
NEEDS ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

| Content | Slightly | Adequately | Extensively |
|--|----------|------------|-------------|
| 1. To what extent, does your organization have in place well-established organizations that deal with the subject areas required in DOE's General Employee Training? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 2. To what extent, does your organization currently provide orientation for your employees? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 3. To what extent, does it explain about radiation hazards, effects and risk? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 4. To what extent, does it explain about hazardous material recognition, effects, and control? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 5. To what extent, does it explain about on-the-job safety in relation to the worker and the environment? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 6. To what extent, does it explain about what to do in an emergency, including response, evacuation, fire and health protection? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 7. To what extent, does it explain about the responsibility of the worker in carrying out the above activities? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 8. To what extent, does it identify the organizations established to address all of the subject areas? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 9. To what extent, is there an appropriate organization to provide, update, and document the training? | _____ | _____ | _____ |