

# **Safety Culture**

## ***Policy Statement***



**“...the core values and behaviors resulting from a collective commitment**

**... to emphasize safety over competing goals to ensure protection of people and the environment.”**



**T**he North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Health Service Regulation, Radiation Protection Section, in conjunction with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, endorses and promotes a **Culture of Safety**.

## **Safety Culture Policy Applies To You**

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This policy statement applies to all licenses issued in North Carolina under 15A NCAC 11.0300, all registrations issued under 15A NCAC 11.0200, all mammography facilities, and all applicants for a license or a registration subject to North Carolina Radiation Protection Section (NCRPS) authority. While the safety culture policy statement and traits are not incorporated into the regulations, many of the safety culture traits may be inherent to existing radiation safety programs.

In March 2011, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) approved the Safety Culture Policy Statement, following a three-year development period during which the agency engaged its licensees, Agreement States and other interested parties. The NCRPS is heavily vested in this effort and encourages the development and implementation of Safety Culture policies and practices among all its licensees and registrants.



# NCRPS Safety Culture Policy Statement

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***NCRPS expects individuals and organizations performing regulated activities to establish and maintain a positive safety culture commensurate with the safety and security significance of their activities and the nature and complexity of their organizations and functions. This responsibility is codified in 15A NCAC 11.1603(a) and is a fundamental tenet under which licenses and registrations are granted. Because safety and security are the primary pillars of the NCRPS regulatory mission, consideration of both safety and security issues, commensurate with their significance, is an underlying principle of the Safety Culture Policy Statement.***

## Definition of Safety Culture

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Safety culture is the core values and behaviors resulting from a collective commitment by leaders and individuals to emphasize **safety over competing goals** to ensure protection of people and the environment.



## Traits of a Positive Safety Culture

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Experience has shown that certain personal and organizational traits are present in a positive safety culture. The following are traits of a positive safety culture:

- **Leadership Safety Values and Actions** – Leaders demonstrate a commitment to safety in their decisions and behaviors.
- **Problem Identification and Resolution** – Issues potentially impacting safety are promptly identified, fully evaluated, and promptly addressed and corrected commensurate with their significance.
- **Personal Accountability** – All individuals take personal responsibility for safety.
- **Work Processes** – The process of planning and controlling work activities is implemented so that safety is maintained.
- **Continuous Learning** – Opportunities to learn about ways to ensure safety are sought out and implemented.
- **Environment for Raising Concerns** – A safety conscious work environment is maintained where personnel feel free to raise safety concerns without fear of retaliation, intimidation, harassment, or discrimination.
- **Effective Safety Communication** – Communications maintain a focus on safety.
- **Respectful Work Environment** – Trust and respect permeate the organization.

- **Questioning Attitude** – Individuals avoid complacency and continuously challenge existing conditions and activities in order to identify discrepancies that might result in error or inappropriate action.

***There may be additional traits not included here that are also important in a positive safety culture. These traits were not developed for inspection purposes.***



## Importance for Regulated Entities

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Industry experience has shown the value of establishing and maintaining a positive safety culture. NCRPS believes that through continued outreach this value will become apparent. It is important to remember that individuals and organizations performing regulated activities bear the primary responsibility for safety and security. North Carolina RPS can monitor and trend the performance of licensees and registrants to determine compliance with regulatory requirements and commitments. Additionally, this information may serve as an indicator of possible problem areas in an organization's safety culture. However, NCRPS does not monitor or trend the traits in the policy statement. As previously stated, the policy statement is not a regulation; therefore, it is the responsibility of NCRPS' licensees and registrants to consider how to apply this policy statement to regulated activities as part of their radiation safety programs.

## Moving Forward

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North Carolina RPS will continue to engage stakeholders in dialogue regarding the importance of a positive safety culture in their specific activities. North Carolina RPS will also seek feedback on the ability of stakeholders to use the policy statement in those activities, as well as to determine areas in the policy statement where changes may be appropriate.



## Background

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Safety Culture is not a new concept. The 1986 nuclear accident at the Ukraine, Chernobyl nuclear power plant revealed the importance of safety culture. It also revealed the impact of weaknesses in safety culture. The 1996 “Freedom of Employees in the Nuclear Industry To Raise Safety Concerns Without Fear of Retaliation” policy statement applies to the regulated activities of all NRC licensees and their contractors.

North Carolina RPS codifies this concept in 15A NCAC 11 .1007. This rule provides the expectation that licensees, registrants, and other employers subject to North Carolina authority establish and maintain work environments in which employees feel free to raise safety concerns without fear of retaliation.

NCRPS seeks to further emphasize the importance of safety culture by the issuance of this Policy Statement.



## The mission of the Radiation Protection Section is to:

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- **Reduce** radiation exposure to the citizens and occupational workers of North Carolina; reduce radiation contamination to the environment and to protect all from radiation hazards by ensuring the existence of a preeminent radiation safety culture.
- **Ensure** all licensees and registrants have equal opportunity to comply with applicable regulations through education and guidance.
- **Attain** self-sufficiency through the collection of licensing, registration and inspection fees, grants and the development and implementation of training programs all driven by responsible fiscal accountability.
- **Provide** employment that is rewarding through compensation, education and opportunity. Through hard work and perseverance we all REAP the benefits.



[www.dhhs.nc.gov](http://www.dhhs.nc.gov)



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9/14