

# How to Keep the Ball Rolling with Your Safety Management System During a Change of Command

Leadership involvement, commitment, and support are the foundation of a successful safety management system (SMS), as leaders establish SMS expectations and provide resources for an effective SMS.

Department of Defense (DoD) organizations frequently experience leadership change every few years. This turnover makes it difficult to maintain leadership involvement, commitment, and support during the transition. Leaders generally increase their involvement in safety and health (S&H) and your SMS once they understand what is required of them and where your organization currently stands. This one pager provides education and engagement ideas for new leadership so your SMS doesn't fall behind or regress.



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## EDUCATE NEW LEADERS ON YOUR SMS

Schedule a face-to-face meeting between SMS representatives and your new leadership. If possible, schedule this meeting **before** the leadership transition at your worksite, involving your current leaders to brief the new leader on your SMS. If that isn't feasible, hold the meeting soon after the leadership transition. Make sure your new leader is knowledgeable on your SMS before moving forward with new plans and ideas. Items to cover in the meeting include:

- Explain the Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 6055.01 SMS requirement (your Service or Agency may have a requirement too)
- Inform the new leader of which SMS criteria your organization is implementing
- Provide an overview of your organization's past and current SMS efforts, successes, and organizational improvements
- Discuss the benefits to having an SMS, including how your SMS helps accomplish your organization's mission without interruption due to injury or loss
- Describe leadership roles and responsibilities in an SMS, what actions are needed from them, and how you can help as an SMS advisor
- Give ideas on how to demonstrate visible involvement, support, and commitment for S&H and your SMS (e.g., lead or attend executive safety council meetings, reward safe behaviors, hold others accountable for S&H responsibilities, participate in workplace walkthroughs, encourage two-way communications)
- Describe your organization's operational hazards and risks and how the SMS addresses these issues
- Discuss top SMS actions, goals, and expectations going forward
- Explain the risks of not supporting the SMS going forward and the opportunities for improvement if they do support your SMS efforts.



## CREATE AND SHARE AN SMS CONTINUITY BINDER WITH LEADERSHIP

If your organization developed an SMS continuity binder, make sure it is up to date and share it with your new leader. The binder is an organization-specific guide to help your leaders understand current and planned SMS implementation and sustainment efforts. It assesses SMS performance and provides necessary planning materials to foster continuous improvement.

### Information to include in a Continuity Binder

- Summary including a general overview of the SMS and how it supports the mission and why it is being implemented
- Key target dates for SMS implementation
- List of key personnel assigned to lead or support the SMS
- Gap analysis results showing completed actions vs. needed actions for full SMS implementation
- Status of current SMS efforts
- List of visible leadership activities performed and successful in the past

Additionally, ask your new leader to review:

- **Command Strategic Plan:** Describes how the SMS is considered and integrated into all business processes
- **Most Recent Annual SMS Self-Evaluation:** Identifies SMS strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement going forward.

## UPDATE SMS DOCUMENTATION

Create a list of documents your new leader needs to review, sign, or rewrite and reissue. Inform the new leader of the importance of updating these documents. Key documents to update include:

- **S&H Policy Statement:** Make this policy a top priority and include your new leader's own safety-related philosophy statement. Have top leadership sign the statement and personally communicate it to the workforce
- **Communication Policy:** Ask the new leader to re-sign your SMS communication policy, if applicable, to encourage open communication and feedback.

Replace newly signed leadership documents on official safety bulletin boards, internal websites, and anywhere else where previous leadership documentation may be posted.

## NOTIFY SMS AUTHORITIES OF LEADERSHIP CHANGES

Some SMSs have criteria to notify the approval/certification body of a leadership change within a certain timeframe. Review your SMS criteria to see if this requirement applies.

It is also a good idea to mention any leadership change in your annual SMS self-evaluation reports.

For additional information on the SMCX's services, please visit the SMCX-hosted website at: <https://www.smcx.org/>.



### If you are an OSHA VPP STAR site:

Inform your regional OSHA office of your leadership change within 30 days.

Mention the leadership change as a "significant event" in the annual self-evaluation