Safety Assurance Guidance

An effective Safety Management System is driven by good Safety Assurance

Summary and the role of the senior manager
Why should you read this?

RSSB has produced Safety Assurance guidance (July 2013) in response to concerns raised by the high level Industry Safety Meeting and the new Regulation on the Common Safety Method (CSM) for Monitoring.

This short document summarises the aims and intentions of the guidance, with a focus on explaining your legal requirements, in addition to making the case for good safety assurance and explaining the role of the senior manager.

The key legal requirements are contained within ROGS (2006), in particular Regulation 22, Cooperation, and also the Regulation CSM for Monitoring, which takes effect from early June 2013.

The Safety Assurance guidance addresses these and is supported by RSSB’s Understanding the new Regulation on the Common Safety Method for Monitoring, which was issued to rail industry Heads of Safety in February 2013 to explain the Regulation.

The CSM for Monitoring requires a Strategy for Monitoring and a Plan, to be applied in a proportionate manner. Companies will be required to make changes to their Safety Management Systems (SMSs), but the degree of change will depend on the current range of safety assurance activities and their level of integration into a written strategy and application via a plan.

The guidance applies a Safety Assurance model, based on the well-defined Plan – Do – Check – Act SMS model.

It contains many examples of good practices, check lists, tools and templates and hyperlinks to other appropriate sources.

Use of the guidance should lead to both improved safety management, particularly at the interface, and business effectiveness.

What is good safety assurance?

Good safety assurance is the effective checking that what is stated in the SMS is done, that it is effective, and that it gains the intended results.

Good safety assurance will give senior managers the confidence that the controls selected to manage all known safety risks are in place and are effective.

It will identify weaknesses and, through a systematic cyclical process of monitoring and review, facilitate improvement by the effective application of new and enhanced controls.

Good safety assurance will also result in the integration of lessons learnt (eg after accidents) into safety management systems.

Safety assurance should be comprehensive, covering all risk areas, including the important issue of management of change.

Good safety assurance should also include the understanding of behaviours (eg commitment, trust and the approach to learning) and their impact on risk management.
How is good safety assurance important?
You will see in the guidance that good safety assurance will assist in the better management of risks and the reduction of loss from inefficiency and accidents.

Good safety assurance will lead to a well-coordinated control of all safety risks. It will assist in improving the safety management system and its application. This will allow better overall risk management, fewer accidents and loss, and so will bring financial benefits.

There may be many challenges to achieving good safety assurance, e.g. lack of resources and time to plan, silo-structures that make dealing with all safety risks difficult, or failure to gather relevant information from all sources and then filter it to suit the reviewing body. The guidance assists in addressing these challenges with typical examples of many good practices, some of which can be downloaded and customised.

Adaption of the contents of the guidance to fit company systems should assist in meeting the requirements of the CSM for Monitoring.

Cooperation – Safety assurance at the interface
Good safety assurance is the effective checking that what is stated in the SMS is done, that it is effective, and that it gains the intended results.

The Safety Assurance guidance contains a section on Company to Company Safety Assurance. Although the Safety Assurance model can be applied to both internal and interface risks and their controls, there are some significant factors that make a separate section appropriate.

There is a general view across the industry that internal risks are controlled well, but there is a lack of knowledge about how interfacing companies understand and control the shared risks.

The control of interface risks requires cooperation on assessing risks, planning, monitoring and reviewing.

The guidance introduces a range of tools to manage safety assurance, including the Shared Risk Register. This is intended to assist with the assurance of controls of shared risks at all levels and can be incorporated into the joint safety improvement plan process (JSIP), e.g.:

- Risks related to a merger
- Risks due to a major project
- Day to day station interface risks

It is intended that this section of the guidance assists the industry in achieving a step change in the management of safety interface risks through systematic joint safety assurance.
Safety assurance of the railway system
System safety assurance relates to the combination of the activities undertaken by the whole industry to provide reassurance to external stakeholders.

The guidance explains the key, but very different, contributions made by transport operators, the ORR and RSSB, to overall system safety assurance.

Cooperation is required, to achieve safe operation of the transport system, and it can also, assist in giving assurance that the industry is safe and that the controls agreed to manage the safety risks are adequate, effectively applied and gaining the intended results.

Companies should contribute through the sharing of safety information and good practices across the industry and through active participation in cross-industry groups.

The role of the senior manager
Without the support of senior managers the benefits of good safety assurance will not be achieved.

Leadership
Demonstration of commitment and sponsorship by senior management is vital to make good safety assurance a reality, via:

Policies and arrangements
The effectiveness of the Safety Management System will depend on the safety assurance policy and arrangements. The CSM for Monitoring requires a Strategy and a Plan as part of the Monitoring Process. Senior managers are ultimately responsible for legal compliance, but beyond that, effective risk management makes good business sense and this requires good safety assurance.

Resources
A key role for the senior management team is ensuring the necessary resources are made available for the assurance of the control of all safety risks. An important aspect of this is the competence of those involved in safety assurance and the application of this guidance, from setting the strategy, to monitoring and review.

Review
Review of monitored information on the higher level risks will require the authority of senior managers. High level review should be based on the analysis of appropriately filtered information on all areas of risk. This will include the identification of any information that does not give a consistent picture. This will allow informed debate and decision making.

Learning lessons
At the end of the safety assurance cycle relevant senior managers should be involved in the corporate learning of lessons, its effective implementation and the communication of agreed actions.

Cooperation
Cooperation at interfaces is required and this will require senior managers with the appropriate authority to initiate safety assurance actions with interfacing organisations.