



South Cumbria &  
North Lancashire Branch

## Joint Zoom meeting 18<sup>th</sup> September 2020



South Cumbria Occupational  
Health & Safety Group

**Topic:** *Contractor management*

**Speakers:** Gary McAteer, Safety Advisor, Management of Contractors Department, *Sellafield Sites Ltd*, and  
Director, *Energy Coast, Safety, Health and Environmental Solutions (ECSH&ES)*.

Elsa Mason, Vice Chair, *South Cumbria & North Lancashire IOSH Branch*, welcomed members to the joint virtual meeting with *South Cumbria Occupational Health & Safety Group (SCOHS)*. She then introduced Gary, our Branch Chairman, who had kindly agreed to make a presentation about contractor management.

Gary introduced the session with a summary of his health and safety work experience at the Sellafield site – 25 years in radiation protection, seven years managing contractors and three years managing operations/decommissioning. In addition, he also set up a consultancy firm, *ECSH&ES*, in 2016.

He explained that decommissioning Sellafield is a massive operation that will take many more years. This project currently involves 12,500 staff who work for more than 40 contractors working in six different Sellafield site locations. He said that some of the main contractors employ sub-contractors. The complexity of the decommissioning project means that *Sellafield Ltd* needs a robust contractor management system to ensure that all contractors on site work safely and that the work that they undertake does not endanger themselves, or others working on site.

Gary said that the key to managing contractors safely is ensuring that there are effective communication systems between the Client and contractors and between contractors. He explained that *Sellafield Ltd* uses the following communication channels:

- *Contractors' Safety Group* – all contractors' safety managers are expected to attend; the meeting's agenda is based on feedback from individual contractors' pre-meetings where safety problems/successes are discussed by tradesmen and managers and referred to the CSG.
- *Contractors' web site* – provides information about Sellafield site's safety management system, work protocols, links to additional information etc....
- *E-mail health and safety updates* – sent to managers, contractors and workers as necessary.
- *Building control points* – each building has a building controller with beepers and Fax machines (used instead of modern technology because Sellafield is a high security site).

Gary then explained that, as Sellafield's decommissioning programme is a long-term project, *Sellafield Ltd* is developing a trusted contractors' partnership programme where main contractors, with specific skill sets, are given 20-year contracts to ensure continuity of standards and processes. These include contractors such as, *Wood Group* (project design), *KBR* (integration, engineering solutions), *Morgan Sindall* (construction infrastructure) and *Doosan Babcock* (Construction processes).

He explained that contractors on the Sellafield site are not just construction workers. There are also canteen staff, cleaners, logistic workers, ventilation engineers, instrumentation engineers, IT experts etc... who all need to be managed and to follow safe practices at work.

Due to the size of Sellafield's decommissioning operation Gary explained that *Sellafield Ltd* has a small team of people who are responsible for managing contractors on a day-to-day basis. These include:

- Control room operators - on duty 24/7.
- An emergency response team - on-call 24/7.
- Safety auditors - who undertake regular safety audits and inspections, including themed audits and audits in response to potential 'hot topic' safety problems.
- Industrial Relations Manager –on-call to facilitate speedy resolution of industrial problems.

Gary explained that although *Sellafield Ltd* was responsible for ensuring that the Sellafield site was managed safely, individual contractors were responsible for the safety of their workers and for ensuring that their workers complied with the requirements of *Sellafield Ltd's* site safety management system.

He said that *Sellafield Ltd* sets trade specific standards for all on-site contractors. These are set out on Sellafield's contractors' web site. They include safety and job training requirements for managers and other employees, knowledge and understanding of site safety procedures, where to find up-to-date site safety information, knowledge and understanding of site emergency procedures, knowledge and skills standards for tradesmen etc...

*Sellafield Ltd* has responded to Covid-19 restrictions by setting up a track and trace system for everyone on site. This includes testing all on-site workers who have Covid-19 symptoms such as a raised temperature. They also require all employees to report a positive Covid-19 test result even if the test was taken off site so that site contacts can be traced and self-isolate.

Gary explained that lock-down followed by Covid-19 restrictions, had made contractors and *Sellafield Ltd* reassess their potential business risks and plans for future business continuity.

Gary then briefly looked at the problems faced by SMEs who employ contractors to undertake specialist maintenance tasks, refurbishment, construction work etc... He said that SMEs need to adopt similar contractor management principles to those needed for managing large projects. He emphasised that it was important that SMEs employed competent contractors and that they set up a robust tendering process.

Gary then answered some questions from attendees before Elsa thanked him and brought the meeting to a close.

Gary can be contacted via: <https://www.ecshe.co.uk/>

**Related HSE web site links:**

Managing contractors: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/managing/delivering/do/organising/managing-contractors.htm>

Using contractors, a brief guide: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg368.pdf>

Construction phase plan: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/cis80.pdf>

Safe maintenance check list: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/safemaintenance/checklist.htm>