

Central Plateau focuses on reducing errors

Karen Welsh, *Fluor Hanford*

The Central Plateau Remediation Project has taken a new approach in creating a safer working environment for its employees.

Lou Simmons, director of Technical Support for the project, attended a training session last year at the Plutonium Finishing Plant. The training was based on the Institute for Nuclear Power Operations program called "Human Performance Improvement." Among the several components of the training was a module called "Error Reduction," which focused on the concept that the precursors to many of our injuries and incidents in the field are directly related to human errors.

Simmons was so impressed with the error-reduction theory and its potential for direct performance improvement that he decided to develop a training program for his project that emphasized this concept.

"I felt that the focus on error reduction and the factors involved in human performance improvement are integral to safe and efficient work as we continue towards our cleanup mission at the Hanford site," said Simmons. "As we transition from an operational status to deactivation and decommissioning, it's imperative that our workforce use practical concepts to reduce errors as well as following procedures when performing their work. Defense in depth is shifting to become more dependent on error-free performance by the individual and less reliant on engineered safeguards."

Simmons assembled a team of individuals who developed a Web-based training program that employees of the Central Plateau Remediation Project could access from their personal computers and complete at their convenience. The team members involved included Simmons, Paul Gravelle, Paul Polus, Bill Smith and Barbara Williams.

The group developed a PowerPoint presentation titled "Human Performance Improvement – Error Reduction." The 42-slide presentation focuses on the concept that, by understanding that humans *will* make errors, employees can be trained to concentrate and be more attentive in unfamiliar situations. They will perform better, work more safely, comply with procedures more often and improve their efficiency.

Williams, who narrates the PowerPoint presentation, said, "In our culture, error reduction is a good message to convey to our new D&D world. We need to concentrate on 'what-ifs' in pre-planning. Asking the what-if questions is another line of defense in catching errors as our workers deal with constantly changing hazards."



Paul Gravelle (standing) and Bill Smith discuss one of the slides from Central Plateau Remediation Project's new Web-based error-reduction training program.

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Gravelle, who developed the PowerPoint slides for the error-reduction training along with Smith, thinks this message is important for people, especially when encountering unknowns. "As we tear down some of the buildings on the Hanford Site that were erected in the 1940s, there may be changes in configuration that may not have been captured on blueprints," he said. "We can't continue to only follow written procedures — we need to also think outside the box."

To Smith, the reduction theory is a deterrent to Pavlov's theory, which is based on routine responses to certain situations. "We need to be performing work in a 'thinking' state, not just a 'doing' state," Smith said.

Larry Olguin, vice president of the Central Plateau Remediation Project, supports his organization's new training. "This isn't just another flavor-of-the-month type of training program," said Olguin. "It has a proven track record of success in reducing human errors and it is very appropriate for today's challenges of higher performance and zero accidents. It's applicable to all employees regardless of their job functions and should be incorporated into every work activity we perform."

The Human Performance Improvement – Error Reduction Training Web site is accessible through the Hanford Intranet, on the Central Plateau Remediation Project link under CP Programs. Click on "Training" and "Error Reduction." Questions may be directed to Lou Simmons at 373-1150 or via e-mail.■