

Case Study 10

Event and Incident Response Management – UK Water Company

Background

In today's busy and challenging operational environment incidents and events can occur for a variety of reasons and many water companies are keen to get ahead of the curve when dealing with these threats to their business. Regulators are very much focussing in on both the number and types of incidents and this scrutiny coupled with the loss some water companies have seen of experienced staff has led to increased demand for practical operational training in the identification, prevention, and management of incidents. In a 2020 speech Sir James Bevan outgoing Chief Executive of the Environment Agency outlined his views on managing incidents included the view that handling them badly can ruin an organisations reputation.



The client, a UK Water Company, had decided that they should review their company processes with regard to their management of incidents and events. They recognised there was a potential risk to their business if the processes of incident and event management as well staff's awareness was not refreshed, and the mindset challenged.

The course is applicable to all aspects of the operational environment of water companies including water treatment, water network, waste water network and waste water treatment.

What was the aim of the Programme?

The programme had four primary aims:

1. To help address operational performance whilst embedding processes and procedures to assist in the recognition, prevention, management, recovery, review and improvements following incident and events.
2. To develop the mindset and awareness of operational management in ways in which they can prevent the occurrence of incidents and events by creating the right culture of risk acceptance and management.
3. To support the company in raising staff's awareness of the issues associated with incidents and events in order to minimise their number moving forward.
4. To discuss existing processes and assess if fit for purpose through the review of previous events and subsequent analysis.

Who was the target audience?

The target audience consisted of members of the Company's senior operational management team including managers of assets, operational control centres, operations, projects and maintenance as well as key directors.

What did the programme involve?

The aims of the delivery were discussed and agreed with the Project Sponsor. The logic, reason and purpose of the training requested was reviewed and understood. Once the aims were confirmed a methodology was developed that would enable the delivery of the training to meet its objectives with the target audience in the agreed timeframe.

The course, '**Level 5 in Understanding Event and Incident Response Management in the Water and Environmental Industries**' can be delivered over two, three, or four days but the client in this instance opted for the two-day delivery involving a combination of taught material and numerous examples of incidents and events. To put into context the taught material a number of group exercises were carried out throughout the training on realistic scenarios to establish if learners have taken on board taught material. There was also group discussion and analysis of previous operational incidents looking at root causes and lessons learnt. The course involved the delivery of key themes of incident prevention recognising that in order to prevent their occurrence we must be able to recognise the nature and type of incidents and events that can occur in the water industry – how they can originate. Once this is recognised strategies can then be developed to prevent and/or mitigate their occurrence and processes to do this were discussed with real examples of incidents analysed. Discussion then took place on the management and recovery from incidents considering key factors including both the impact on staff and customers, what information and records to gather and retain during an incident or event and why. Then the final stages of the delivery took place – the review and analysis of events and near misses, the learning process, lessons learnt and how we can use these lessons to improve operational performance and minimise risk. There were a number of assessment questionnaires completed by participants throughout the two days to test their learning and understanding of the main themes and these were done on a group basis (but can be done individually). These were then summarised and provided to the Project Sponsor.

What were the outcomes?

Feedback from participants was positive with more than 90% of all participants stating they now had a better idea of ways in which they could prevent incidents and events and felt the training will enhance their operational competence and capability in the face of future incidents and events. The figure rose to 97% when understanding the changes necessary to ensure their organisation is better prepared for incidents and events of the future. They found the opportunity to discuss and analyse their company's previous incidents and events and on-going trends was particularly useful when comparing to the themes delivered in the training and the exercises in which they participated. Many participants felt the training offered practical assistance to their daily challenges in the avoidance of the generation of operational problems. Having the opportunity to participate in the training and learn from others in their company was also seen as a positive as well as the investment made in their personal development.



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