

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of Executive Director for Operations

OEDO Procedure

New

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OEDO PROCEDURE - 0930 Revision 0

Task Force Charters

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to provide guidance to staff to: (1) determine whether the creation of a task force is warranted for a particular set of circumstances, and (2) facilitate the preparation of the charter to ensure the charter is an effective communication tool to the task force members and other stakeholders. This procedure is intended to support the activities governed by Management Directive (MD) 8.3, "NRC Incident Investigation Program."

Incident Investigation Team (IIT) report recommendations are considered for entry into the Lessons Learned Program (MD 6.8), therefore an IIT may obviate the need for a separate task force. Should the Executive Director for Operations (EDO) determine that a task force review of an incident is necessary in addition to the response governed by MD 8.3, it is not expected that this review would be started until the MD 8.3 investigation has been completed.

The primary focus of any task force created under this Office of the Executive Director for Operations (OEDO) procedure is to evaluate the NRC's processes and performance as they relate to the event or condition of interest.

2. BACKGROUND

The use of multi-office task forces to review areas of concern has increased as the NRC has become more proactive in seeking ways to identify and address weaknesses before they contribute to a condition which significantly degrades safety or security or otherwise negatively impacts the ability of the agency to carry out its mission. Creating a charter that clearly delineates the purpose of the task force and the expected deliverables is essential to the efficient and effective functioning of a task force.

In response to the condition discovered at Davis-Besse in 2002 and the resulting internal reviews, the EDO directed the creation of a Lessons Learned Program (LLP) to ensure that the corrective actions that address the most significant agency lessons learned are institutionalized to prevent recurrence. The recommendations developed by task forces are one of the major sources of input to the LLP. Experience has shown that a task force that takes the time to clearly communicate and fully support its recommendations improves the ability of the agency to effectively respond to them. The LLP is more fully described in MD 6.8 and its associated handbook.

3. BASIC STEPS

The steps below are designed to facilitate the creation of an effective task force charter. This procedure does not try to anticipate every possible consideration that will go into the formulation of a particular charter, but instead focuses on the common themes that are likely to be addressed in the majority of task force charters.

3.1 Determine the Need for a Task Force

A task force may be associated with an event, a series of events, or a condition. Since the need for a task force may not be immediately evident before the details are available to senior management, the OEDO staff should be vigilant in looking for issues which would benefit from the use of a task force. Potential issues should be discussed with OEDO management whenever the need arises. Because of the special role of the Lessons Learned Program Manager (LLPM) in addressing significant agencywide problems, the LLPM should be particularly sensitive to the potential need for a task force.

The need for a task force under this procedure should not be determined by the level of effort required to investigate an issue. A very important issue may only require a small number of people to form the task force. This distinction is important because task force findings will be considered for entry into the LLP which applies a rigorous and formal process to address the most significant deficiencies. Absent the use of a task force, the possibility exists that an issue that meets the threshold may not be subjected to this rigorous corrective action process.

The following questions may be helpful in determining the need for a task force. All questions may not be applicable for every event or condition.

- Does the issue have the potential to have high health and safety or security impact, or involve the health and safety of NRC employees?
- Does the issue have the potential to negatively impact public confidence?
- Is there a strong likelihood that the task force would develop issues that would meet the threshold for entry in the LLP?
- Would the agency's needs be best served by a more independent review of the issue?
- Will the issue receive appropriate attention absent the creation of a task force (e.g., by an office or some other programmatic review) and will the results be provided for LLP consideration?

The appropriate DEDO(s) will make the final determination on the need for a task force in consultation with the EDO.

3.2 General Guidance on Charter Development

The OEDO staff person directed to develop a charter should seek the greatest amount of staff input that is consistent with the time available to develop the charter and the current level of understanding of the issues of interest. As a minimum, the task force leadership should thoroughly review the charter and understand its intent before it is routed for approval. When more time is available, or the issues lack sufficient clarity to write a charter, consider seeking input from the appropriate offices and regions before drafting the charter.

The OEDO staff assigned to develop the charter should meet with the cognizant DEDO(s) as soon as the need for a charter is identified to determine which of these approaches or variations will be employed. The cognizant DEDO will have the final approval of a charter's content. An initial meeting among the DEDO, team leadership, and LLPM to clarify expectations is encouraged.

The willingness of NRC to examine its own practices and procedures enhances public confidence. Therefore task force charters should normally be publicly available documents. If certain aspects of the charter are sensitive, consider including these in an attachment so that the main body of the charter can be released to the public.

3.3 Task Force Charter Format

The following elements should be addressed in every task force charter:

Background - The background section should provide a summary of the event or condition that required the establishment of the task force.

Objective - Self explanatory.

Scope - The scope should explain the area(s) to be reviewed in sufficient detail so that the task force has a clear understanding of what is in and out of bounds during the review. The charter should normally include a statement giving the task force the authority to expand the scope of the review based on the information it collects after discussions with the cognizant DEDO. In the development of the scope, consideration should be given to providing the task force with any constraints the cognizant DEDO may provide.

Report Schedule - Include in the charter the expected deliverables and due dates to the cognizant DEDO of the task force report. Provide guidance on seeking adjustments to the schedule appropriate to the circumstances.

Task forces typically require 4 to 6 months to perform their work, however there are many variables to consider. Discuss the specifics with the OEDO management team and the task force leadership to determine an appropriate due date. A few specific factors to consider:

- Is there an NRC response under MD 8.3?
- Participation by outside organizations (such as Agreement States)

- Independence of team members from previous involvement in the issue and expected involvement in addressing the recommendations
- Complexity of the expected issues
- Task force staffing and level of effort (full- or part-time)
- The level of external stakeholder interest

Report Recommendations - The charter should provide amplifying guidance on the structure and level of specificity of the recommendations to be provided in the final report. Issues discovered during the review that require immediate corrective action should be promptly raised to the cognizant DEDO for consideration. Note that this does not preclude a more thorough review under the LLP process after the immediate corrective action has been taken.

Recommendations should be well supported by the findings and examples contained in the report. The report format should make recommendations and their supporting bases easy to locate and provide a cross reference if necessary. Although recommendations may take the form of specific solutions for straightforward and narrowly focused issues discovered during the review, recommendations that address complex issues should be of a general nature. It is not the task force's job to propose solutions for the problems it identifies, rather the expectation is that the task force provide enough information so that the recommendations can be clearly understood and effectively addressed when they are subsequently tasked to the offices by the EDO.

The task force should identify any recommendations it believes meet the threshold for entry into the LLP, the criteria are listed in the handbook for MD 6.8. The Lessons Learned Oversight Board will make the final determination on which recommendations are entered into the LLP. No other ranking or rating of the recommendations is desired.

Although the team may request comments on its draft report from NRC offices and regions in an effort to clarify findings, examples, and recommendations, it is not required. Likewise, it is not required to receive any concurrence's on the report outside of the team. Any external review should be factored into the team's schedule so as to meet the report deadline.

The task force's report will be a public document. If certain aspects of the report are sensitive, include these in an attachment so that the rest of the report can be released to the public.

Staffing - The general practice for staffing task forces is to first select the team leadership by holding discussions between the cognizant DEDO and the relevant offices and regions. Additional members are then solicited in consultation with

the task force's leadership. The task force's independence should be weighed carefully, particularly in selecting personnel for the leadership positions.

Staffing has to be considered in conjunction with the expected report delivery date and the competing activities of the task force members. If circumstances dictate a relatively short period for the task force to complete their work, the number of staff and their level of effort may have to be greater. The charter should make clear expectations regarding the level of effort expected (e.g., full-time, half-time) for each team member (they don't all have to be the same). A TAC number should be established to track the effort expended by the task force members.

The charter should communicate the expectation that task force members will be relieved of their competing duties, to the extent necessary, to allow them time to fulfill their task force role, and that they are expected to remain on the task force until the final report is written. The cognizant DEDO may approve the replacement of a task force member if requested by the Office Director.

Consider including a person with expertise in communications on the team and in the development of the charter since the task force's report and the charter are likely to be publicly available documents. This may be accomplished by adding an EDO Communication Assistant (CA) to the task force on a part-time basis.

Senior Management Interface

The task force reports directly to the cognizant DEDO on all matters related to the task force's work.

Other Considerations

The section provide an opportunity to provide additional specific guidance that is situation dependent.

3.4 Issuing the Charter

The charter should be issued as a memorandum from the EDO to the task force leader with distribution to all office directors and regional administrators. In addition to the creator, the charter should be concurred on by the LLPM, the task force leader, the AO, and the cognizant DEDO.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES AND AUTHORITIES

Executive Director for Operations (EDO)

Authorizes the creation of a task force and approves the task force charter.

Deputy Executive Directors for Operations (DEDOs)

Each DEDO should recommend to the EDO, as appropriate, the creation of a task force to review areas of significant concern in the offices and regions under his or her cognizance.

Serves as the reporting authority for the task force team leader.

Assistant for Operations (AO)

Reviews and concurs on task force charters.

Lessons Learned Program Manager (LLPM)

Writes the task force charters as assigned. Coordinates review and comment of the draft charter with the assigned task force team leader and impacted offices and regions. The LLPM should seek feedback from future task force participants and revise this procedure as appropriate.

Task Force Leader

Reviews the draft charter and provides feedback to ensure clarity and a common understanding of the objectives, scope, and deliverables.

Executes the requirements of the charter.

5. REFERENCES

MD 5.3 - NRC/Agreement State Working Groups
MD 6.8 - Lessons Learned Program
MD 8.3 - Incident Investigation Program

Recently Issued Charters

Liquid Radioactive Release Lessons-Learned Task Force and Charter, dated March 10, 2006. (ML060690186)
2005 Hurricane Season Lessons-Learned Task Force and Charter, dated November 4, 2005. (ML052920828)

6. APPENDICES

None.

7. EFFECTIVE DATE

July 27, 2006.