



Safety Culture Threat: The Normalization of Deviance

This safety moment describes an important cultural threat, Normalization of Deviance, and provides questions to promote team reflection and discussion.

Normalization of deviance occurs when it becomes generally acceptable to deviate from policies, O&M procedures, construction specifications/work packages and processes. The organization fails to implement or consistently apply its [Pipeline Safety Management System](#) principles across the operation (regional or functional disparities exist). Safety rules and layers-of-protection / defenses are routinely circumvented in order to get the job done, *or in our industry, get the pipe in the ground as soon as possible.*

Key characteristics of normalization of deviance (Attributes)

- The organization failing to provide adequate or effective systems, processes, and procedures for work being performed
- The organization fails to meet the “spirit” of 192.605 Procedural manual for operations, maintenance, and emergencies – *it’s not necessarily what the code “says”, it’s what it is intended to protect.....*
- The organization failing to provide necessary financial, human, and technical resources
- Impracticable rules, processes and procedures that *look good on paper yet impractical to implement*, which make compliance and achievement of other organizational outcomes mutually exclusive
- Well intended employees finding workarounds in response to operational inadequacies
- [The operations and maintenance procedure update process \(MOC\) is inadequate](#)
- The organization failing to provide employees with effective mechanisms to resolve operational inadequacies – *resolving operational conflicts in the field.....*

Examples of normalization of deviance (Descriptors)

1. Operational deviations are not managed using change and risk management processes.
2. Some safety rules and operational procedures are not practical in the operating environment.
3. There is an extended time between reporting of safety issues (hazards, inspection and audit findings, other deficiencies, etc.) and their resolution.
4. Maintenance activities are not prioritized and executed as planned.
5. Processes and procedures are not routinely assessed for accuracy, completeness, or effectiveness.
6. [During emergencies, procedure work-a-rounds occur and are not documented](#)

Questions for team discussion - *Discuss “Work-Arounds Avoidance” in Pre-Job Briefs*

1. How does our organization stay vigilant to and combat normalization of deviance?
2. What can we do to enhance our vigilance to normalization of deviance?



[PSMS Guiding Principle – See Something, Say Something, Do Something!!!!!!!!!!!!](#)