Phase D, Structured Interview Questions Database

Attention to Safety

1.   How does the facility handle the potential trade-offs and conflicts that exist between facility safety and facility productivity?

2.   What would you do to improve the safety attitudes of workers at the facility?

3.   What organizational inhibitors exist that keep people from reporting potential safety concerns?

4.   What things would you change if you could to help you do your job even more safely than you do now and to make this a safer facility?

5.   How much involvement do you and other employees have in the evaluation and resolution of safety problems?

6.   Describe the process used by the facility to correct safety concerns/improve safety conditions.

7.   What do you take into consideration when making a decision on whether a situation is safe enough to continue operation? Does the facility have any criteria established to help you make this decision?

8.   What types of meetings occur at the facility that are devoted solely to safety? Have you ever participated in such a meeting? In what capacity did you participate?

9.   How does management monitor and review and safety and performance of the facility? Are you involved in any way with this monitoring function? What is your role? How are you given results from these types of reviews?

10. What is done to encourage employees at the facility to strive for excellence in matters affecting safety?

Coordination of Work

1. To what extent do the different department managers who must work together to accomplish a project plan together and coordinate their efforts?

2. How is the workflow in your department connected to the workflow of other departments?

3. When a problem situation arises in the facility that involves multiple departments, describe what the different departments do to coordinate their activities to address the situation.

4. When work requires more than one department to participate, how often is the work held up (e.g., workers sit idle) because one department was not there on time, came unprepared, etc.? Why does this happen? What is done to prevent reoccurrence of such situations?

5. Describe the process used in your department to coordinate work across shifts.

6. One a performance problem is recognized, describe how departmental members work together to quickly develop an accurate solution.

7. Describe how your department ensures that planned work is effectively integrated with other ongoing work within the facility.

8. Describe the process used for making decisions within this organization when information relevant to the decision must be obtained from multiple individuals or departments.

Decision-making

1.   Describe the types of decisions that you can make in your day-to-day job without getting approval from your supervisor. What types of decisions require you to get approval from your supervisor?

2.   In an abnormal or emergency situation, are you given expanded or decreased decision-making power? Describe.

3.   If you detected a potential problem while performing your work, describe the steps you would take to correct the problem. Can you give examples of any instances in which this occurred?

4.   How much are employees at your level involved in decision-making activities? What types of decisions do you typically participate in?

5.   Describe how the opinions and preferences of people who will be affected by decisions are solicited and weighed in making decisions within your department? Within the organization?

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

External Communication

1.   What outside agencies or groups exist that function to focus attention on issues other than safety?

2.   What type of relationship does the facility have with regulatory agencies? Please give examples that support your position.

3.   What form does communication with federal and state regulators usually take (e.g., letters, meetings, etc.)? How frequently do you receive communications from federal and state regulators?

4.   What is the nature of arrangements for regulators' access to documentation? To facilities? To operating staff?

5.   At what level of the organization are the facility contacts for the regulatory staff?

6.   Describe any routine meetings that are held with regulatory staff.

7.   Describe the communications that occur between the facility and the corporate office. Who is responsible for this communication? Are regular communications held between the facility and the corporate office? Who participates in these communications? What is the general nature of these communications?

8.   In the event of an emergency, please describe the process that would be used by the facility to contact the various external stakeholders (e.g., regulatory agencies, local governments, media).

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

<u>Formalization</u>

1.   What explicit performance standards or norms, with respect to safety, exist within your department?

2.   What percentage of procedures you regularly use are documented in an incomplete or unclear manner?

3.   Describe the formal procedure by which people in lower levels of the organization are made aware of senior managements' safety concerns.

4.   What procedures are followed when a worker is injured within your department?

5.   Can you cite any examples of safety problems that might have been prevented with additional attention to safe work procedures?

6.   Describe the integrated methodology/procedure used for the evaluation of safety problems.

7.   Describe the formal process that is used to ensure that work is coordinated between relevant departments.

8.   Describe your training on emergency operating procedures. How much are you expected to know by memory?

9.   What is management's policy on following procedures verbatim? Are exceptions to this policy ever made? What actions are necessary to override a procedure?

10.   Describe the process used by the facility for the validation of procedures.

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Goal Setting/Prioritization

1. What types of target levels are attached to safety goals? On what basis are these target levels chosen?

2. What role do you believe safety plays in the long-range planning activity of the facility? Can you give examples to support your position?

3. Have you ever been involved in the establishment of departmental or personal safety goals? How are the organizational goals factored in to these lower levels?

4. What types of concerns are responded to immediately by the organization? What types of concerns are associated with longer response times?

5. To what extent do department managers and their employees understand the priorities of departments other than their own? Do the goals and priorities of different departments ever conflict? What is done to resolve these conflicts?

6. How well are short-range goals (i.e., 1-2 year goals) integrated with long-term facility goals (i.e., 5+ year goals)? Can you provide any examples to support your position?

7. Describe any established method or procedure that is used to help in the determination of priorities and the allocation of resources between competing needs.

8. What changes would you recommend in the way in which the facility establishes goals and priorities?

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interdepartmental Communication

1.   Describe which individuals within other departments that you are required to communicate with in order to accomplish your job. Why is this communication necessary?

2.   How well informed are you about what is going on at the mine site? How do you obtain most of your knowledge regarding mine site activities?

3.   Of the different groups and people that you are required to communicate with, what impediments exist to effective communications? What would you do to change this?

4.   Please describe how you receive information from upper levels of management. What would you change to make this process more effective?

5.   Please describe how you transmit information to upper levels of management. What would you change to make this more effective?

6.   When was the last time you met with other supervisors or workers in the facility to discuss safety problems experienced in your department? What specific problems did you discuss?

7.   How does the organization ensure that workers are sufficiently well informed about facility activities?

Intradepartmental Communication

1. What do you do to make sure that your subordinates/coworkers are aware of safe work practices?

2. If you report a potential safety problem, how does the organization let you know its response?

3. When you have a question about a work-related issue, who are you most likely to go to for help?

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

<u>Organizational Culture</u>

1.   What examples can you provide of different perspectives or "cultures" (e.g., engineer vs. non-engineer) that exist within the facility? What impacts do these different cultures have on facility operations? What is done by facility management to either enhance or minimize these different perspectives?

2.   What adjectives would you use to describe this organization? Why?

3.   What types of behaviors are rewarded by this organization?

4.   Are the values held by employees at the working level consistent with the values held by upper level management? What similarities exist? What differences?

5.   Are you encouraged to work with other employees at your level to solve problems? What obstacles or incentives exist to your being able to do this effectively?

6.   Describe the expectations your management has for you in the performance of your job.

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Organizational Knowledge

1.   Do you feel that employees at the facility have a good understanding of the work others perform? How the facility as a whole functions? Explain. What has the organization done to facilitate or hinder such an understanding? How does your level of understanding help or hinder you in the performance of your job?

2.   What information hierarchies or chains of command exist in this organization? How do you utilize these hierarchies to get work done? In what way does the informal hierarchy differ from the formal hierarchy?

3.   How does the organization treat individuals who do not always follow the formally prescribed hierarchies to get work done or problems solved? In what types of situations is use of the informal hierarchy encouraged? Discouraged?

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Organizational Learning

1.   How is learning from successes and failures communicated at this facility? In what ways could this be improved?

2.   How are changes in performance indicators recognized by senior management? Is this recognition timely?

3.   Have you ever been told where your department stands on a safety measure relative to other departments or to the facility as a whole? How was this done? What were you asked to do about the results? How often do you receive such information?

4.   How are safety reports or audit results provided to workers in your department?

5.   When your department experiences a problem (e.g., equipment failure), what steps do you take to make sure the problem is not only corrected, but to reduce the probability of the failure occurring again in the future?

6.   When a piece of equipment repeatedly fails or you experience the same type of worker injury more than twice, what steps do you take to alleviate the problem?

7.   From a learning perspective, is informative and positive attention given to programs that do not live up to expectations? Explain.

8.   Describe the system in place at the facility for input and analysis of this facility's operating experience.

9.   When an event or incident occurs at another facility, how does this facility utilize that information? Can you provide an example of information obtained from another facility that was used to improve performance at this facility?

10.   Are there formal and informal programs which provide employees in all the functional areas exposure to and awareness of problems experienced and addressed by other facilities?

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

<u>Performance Evaluation</u>

1.   How are individual employees held accountable for safely performing their work?

2.   What incentive systems exist to encourage employees to maintain an excellent individual safety record?

3.   How does safety performance impact an employees chance for promotion?

4.   How do the performance evaluations in your department provide employees with specific feedback.

5.   Please describe the performance evaluations process in your department and the types of variables that are considered in the overall evaluation of an employee's performance.

6.   How often are performance evaluations conducted on employees in your department? How often are they required to be conducted? For what purposes are the performance evaluations conducted?

7.   Please describe the performance standards against which employees are evaluated. Are these standards known by the employees?

8.   Who provides input to an employee's performance evaluation (e.g., supervisor, self, peers, subordinates)?

9.   Describe any training that is conducted for individuals who are responsible for conducting performance evaluations.

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Performance Quality

1.   What examples can you point to that indicate workers taking responsibility in the safe operations of the facility?

2.   How are individual employees held accountable for safely performing their work?

3.   If you receive apparently inaccurate information related to work you are doing, what do you do about it?

4.   Describe specific actions you have taken to enhance safety or to prevent the occurrence of a safety problem.

5.   How would an employee be treated for reporting a problem that they had caused through their own personal error?

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Personnel Selection

1. What evidence can your provide that workers in the facility are either hired or promoted based on their safe work record?

2. When contractors are hired, what steps does the facility take to ensure that these contractors have a safe work record?

3. How do you get assurance that staff are fit for duty at the start of a shift/day?

4. What is the staff turnover rate within your department? Does this have any implications for safety performance?

5. Please describe the process used by the organization to hire a new employee.

6. How often are positions filled from within the company? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this?

7. Once you hire a new person in your department, how long does it take before that person is able to perform their job on their own (e.g., training time, etc.)

8. How long, on average, does it take from the time you submit a requisition to fill a position, until the time that the position is actually filled? How does this impact the work in your department?

Problem Identification and Resolution

1.   How does upper management at this facility anticipate and prepare for external challenges? Are they successful in their attempts to do so?

2.   What activities are in place to help management identify future challenges?

3.   In what ways does your immediate supervisor actively promote problem identification and input from employees?

4.   What methods/procedures are used by individuals to bring problems to the attention of management? How well do they work?

5.   How does upper management promote a thorough search of other mine's operating experiences, and coal industry communications for performance issues that may have reference to this mine?

6.   How does this organization enhance employees' abilities to identify potential performance problems?

7.   Describe any performance improvement programs going on at the facility that you are aware of. Who at the facility is involved in these programs?

8.   How is program effectiveness determined and measured?

9.   Are performance improvements focused predominantly on improving safety or efficiency? Can you think of any instances where there was a potential conflict between these improvement goals?

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Resource Allocation

1. If you were told that the budget for your department would increase by 20% next year, how would you use the increase in resources?

2. How does management decide where it is going to allocate resources?

3. Within your department, how is resource allocation handled?

4. If you discovered a problem that affected the safety or operation of the facility, how would you go about getting the resources to fix it?

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Roles and Responsibilities

1.   What specific job responsibilities do you have that relate to the safe operations of the facility?

2.   What specific job responsibilities do you have that relate to compliance with federal/ governmental standards?

3.   Which special committees/working groups do you serve on at the facility? What is the purpose of these committees/working groups? What responsibilities do you hold on these committees? How were you selected to serve on these committees?

4.   What does the job description that exists for your position say? How accurately does it depict the work that you do?

5.   Have you ever encountered a situation at the facility where you were uncertain or were not able to determine who had overall responsibility for a particular function? What was the situation and how did you resolve it?

6.   What are the roles and responsibilities assigned to you and others in positions comparable to you?

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

<u>Time Urgency</u>

1.   During which types of circumstances (e.g., longwall moves, large roof collapses, normal operations) is the pace most hurried at the facility? Are any mechanisms put in place during such times to offset these time pressures?

2.   What types of pressures do you feel to complete projects within their schedule time frames? What happens if you overrun the schedule?

3.   What types of incentives exist at the facility to complete work in less time than was scheduled? Do these incentives exist for all types of tasks? If not, explain.

4.   When more work is scheduled than can be accomplished (i.e., due to over scheduling, unanticipated events), who decides what work to complete and what work to be rescheduled? How are these decisions made? How often does this happen?

5.   What actions do you take if you believe that more work is scheduled than can be accomplished? What input do you have into the scheduling process? Are subordinates in your department ever consulted in the process of developing a schedule?

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Training

1.   What types of workshops or training sessions are scheduled that specifically address safety issues?

2.   What resources are allocated to the training department? How does this allocation compare with the allocations of other facilities?

3.   What criteria does the facility use to evaluate the effectiveness of its training programs?

4.   What is the proportion of staff time within your department that is devoted to training? How does this compare with the practices of other facilities?

5.   How are trainers selected?

6.   Is it ever necessary to cancel or reschedule training due to operational requirements? For what types of reasons does this occur? How often does this occur?

7.   How are lessons learned from this facility or from other facilities incorporated into the training program?

8.   What types of working groups do training staff participate on and in what capacity does that participation occur?

9.   Describe a recent modification that was made to a training program. Why was this modification necessary?