

Be Prepared

What energy security pros can learn from the nuclear industry.



Nuclear security is one of the greatest challenges facing the world today, but it is one that also mirrors the security challenges found in other industries, most certainly the energy sector. All security professionals deal with the shared threat of natural disaster, terrorist attacks, cyber breaches, inherited problems such as accidents, and internal threats like sabotage from current and past employees.

In response, security professionals have a tremendous responsibility – and even an obligation – to continually introduce dynamic processes and best-practice methods to ensure a safe and secure environment.

Fundamentally, realistic approaches must be taken in relation to what or who is being protected. Although the impact of an attack at a corporate facility can be serious, a security breach at a wind energy farm or electrical utility plant would be much more significant. Each critical infrastructure (CI) needs to be evaluated separately and protection for each implemented based on worst-case scenarios. Although the nuclear industry does not have all the answers, it is one of the most fortified CIs and can provide a good benchmark for what security professionals in the energy sector should consider. This includes:

- **Non-stop Training:** The nuclear industry trains on a non-stop basis for the unknown or an attack, and it is evaluated and audited on a continuous cycle by internal and external stakeholders. Although it is one of the nation's most fortified targets, the industry takes nothing for granted and keeps constant watch to ensure complacency doesn't become an issue.
- **Non-stop Learning:** The culture in the nuclear industry involves addressing any issue, reviewing that issue, implementing corrective actions and drilling further down to ensure that the issue does not happen again.
- **Information Sharing:** Through this process, organizations within the industry share what they learn with other plants, including competitors. Although these organizations are operated by different utilities, they definitely share more information and "best practices" than players in most other industries. It is extremely common for an individual from



one utility to review another company's program and then take the lessons learned back to his or her own plant.

This culture could benefit other industries. Although the traditional paradigm of business has been to keep company secrets under a tight lid, the nuclear security industry believes that sharing thought leadership and ideas can only benefit the entire sector. Plus, if that industry has enough business to go around, every organization within the industry will use the best-practice ideas to improve their company and the industry as a whole.

- **Overall Best Practices:** There are overall best practices that all security professionals could incorporate into their organizations. These include rigorous standards, standardized regulations that raise the normal security requirements and increased security workforce performance standards through experience-based training and continuous education. Other best practices include streamlined convergence and retention workforce measures, higher pay to attract higher-cal-

iber personnel, and a robust safety culture that emphasizes a safety-conscious work environment framed by human performance improvement and heightened threat-awareness training.

With so much at stake, the commercial nuclear industry has set a high standard that energy security personnel should aspire to. Mirroring the best-practices example of the nuclear industry, improvements can be made across the board by implementing high-caliber security applications related to recruiting, training, regulation, auditing, pay scales and work performance, and by the continuous drive to maintain integrity and excellence. ○

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