

## **Workforce Health and Safety Benchmarking** **Balfour Beatty Rail**

Owing to the increased accent upon health and safety in the rail industry and the focus upon rail maintenance and renewals operations in the light of industry events, Balfour Beatty Rail's management wanted to benchmark its health and safety performance against current best practice across industry. Particular focus was given to the maintenance and renewals organisations and how they operate, and the findings from the study fed into a fast track performance improvement programme, which was piloted in one of the maintenance regions.

Entec has wide experience of the application of risk and health and safety management techniques / tools, to a variety of business sectors. Entec's health and safety benchmarking tool incorporates an objective grading system for

performance against best practice measures, and a scoring system which may be used by organisations for setting health and safety performance improvement targets.

Based on total quality management (TQM) principles, the benchmarking tool incorporates the analysis of recognised performance parameters, such as effective risk management, attitudes to risk, resourcing (human, financial and hardware), communications and learning by the organisation. A 'slice' was taken through Balfour Beatty Rail's organisations from top to bottom. By interview, review of health and safety documentation and observation of work being carried out 'on the ground', the organisation was benchmarked against best practice parameters that are pre-set into the

questionnaire framework. The output from the benchmark process was a report detailing issues and action points, which was intended to form the basis of improvement action plans. The tool provides a 'ready reckoner' on performance and can be revisited as action plans are executed, to compare past and present performance.

The fast track improvement programme took outputs from the benchmarking study. With the co-operation and input of staff at all levels in one of the regional organisations of the maintenance division, some 'quick win' improvements were generated that could be rolled-out across the organisation, to encourage both workforce involvement and consistency of health and safety performance improvements.

The features and benefits of this approach were that:

- the management and 'men on the ground' questionnaire formats highlight different attitudes down and across the organisational structure;
- the combination of interview, observation and system / documentation review provides a robust mechanism for highlighting and cross-referencing issues;
- outputs are easy to interpret and act upon;
- the tool provides a scored result to gauge past and present performance; and
- the tool can be used across business units or departments within an organisation, or to benchmark against competitors in an industry.



*Benchmarking Balfour Beatty Rail's health and safety performance against current best practice*

