

## STRATEGY LAB

### Date:

Monday, March 12, 2012  
10:00 am – 4:00 pm for  
journeyman line workers

Tuesday, March 13, 2012  
10:00 am – 4:00 pm &  
Wednesday March 14 from  
8:00 – 10:00 am for  
operation managers\*

Wednesday, March 14, 2012  
8:00 am – 4:30 pm for  
general managers\*\*

Thursday, March 15, 2012  
9:00 am – 1:30 pm for  
general managers

### Location:

Colorado Rural Electric Assn.  
5400 North Washington St.  
Denver, Colorado

### Instructor:

TBA

### Fee:

There is no fee for attending

### To Register:

Contact Meg Vetting at  
(303) 455-2700 ext. 700 or  
[mvetting@coloradorea.org](mailto:mvetting@coloradorea.org)

### Registration Deadline:

January 3, 2011



### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange is working to help electric cooperatives nationwide understand the culture of safety within their organization and understand the culture within the state. Below is an explanation of the Culture of Safety Strategy Labs that Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange has underwritten. All of Colorado's co-ops are encouraged to participate, even if you do not use Federated as your insurance provider.

**Background:** Federated was approached by National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC) about the possibility of developing a program to address cooperative safety programs and initiatives. Phil Irwin and Mike Bird had a conference call with Scott Luecal, then Executive Vice President of NISC, to discuss information he received as a result of strategic planning with the Ohio Rural Electric Cooperative (OREC). OREC's goal was to "Analyze safety performance trends along with the underlying causality factors, benchmark performance against industry and best practice, evaluate options and work with members to promote safe practices in all operations and foster a culture of safety. What came of this conference call was that OREC and NISC wanted to know if Federated would assist in developing and funding a program to compare industry injury numbers with Ohio cooperatives and research why those numbers may not be as good as those of investor owned utilities.

**About the Strategy Lab:** NISC has a computer program that allows anonymous input from up to 40 people with computer stations. Each participant is seated in front of a laptop computer. To gain input from cooperative personnel who are in positions that give them important perspectives on safety at the co-op, the NISC Strategy Lab was used. Each participant uses the computer to address issues, answer questions, provide ideas, and express opinions.

-----  
\*The operation managers will be meeting Tuesday evening for dinner and a roundtable discussion with Bud Branham and on Wednesday morning with the general managers to discuss how to better run co-op safety meetings. More details to follow on Tuesday's dinner & discussion.

\*\*The general managers will meet from 8:00 – 10:00 am with the operation managers to discuss ways of improving the co-op safety meetings. They will then participate in the Strategy Lab. On Thursday, March 15 the general managers will meet at the Warwick Hotel. The meeting will include a legislative briefing, roundtable discussion, and the legislative luncheon. We will adjourn around 1:30 pm

The Strategy Lab was used because of three distinct advantages over traditional focus group approaches:

1. Total anonymity and confidentiality encourages candor.
2. Everyone can provide written input simultaneously rather than individual vocalizations that compete for time and may be subjective based on speaking ability.
3. Data can be instantly assembled, statistically analyzed and graphically presented rather than interpreting potentially awkward and confusing flip-chart records.

The initial research focused on three approaches:

1. A benchmarking study to compare the safety performance of Ohio cooperatives with industry standards;
2. A series of qualitative sessions with cooperative personnel to get their input and perspective;
3. Finding and applying “best practices” from those organizations that have the best safety performances.

The project team developed seven theories to explain what may be underperformance in the area of safety. Those theories are:

1. **Too Nice** (ineffective discipline)  
Many employees are homegrown and this leads to a family atmosphere.
2. **Specializations and Skill Sets**  
IOU lineman may do the same job day in and out. Cooperative lineman may have to do many jobs. (Distribution, Transmission, Underground, Substations, etc)
3. **Leadership and Supervision Deficiency**  
Can a new supervisor effectively manage former fellow linemen?
4. **Complacency**  
Does increased tenure and years of experience actually work against safety? With mastery of tasks, does over confidence set in?
5. **Production Pressures**  
Are production pressures from management or peers?
6. **Safety is too expensive**
7. **Safety is too complicated.**

**All of these theories were tested with the groups. Lineman on day one, Operations Managers on day two, and CEO’s on day three. As a result of the first sessions, seven conclusions were developed.**

1. **Best Practices** – find out how the best performers in Ohio achieve their excellent safety performance and apply to the substandard performers.
2. **Standardization of Measurement** – Take the results of the OSHA 300A survey and continue to benchmark against other Ohio Cooperatives.
3. **Accountability for Safety** – Performance appraisals for manager (including CEO’s) and supervisors should have a meaningful safety performance metric built in.
4. **Correlations Analysis** – Run correlation analysis for all cooperatives to identify how various factors may be affecting actual safety performance.
5. **Leadership and Supervision** – Develop long term plan to enhance the quality of professional leadership and supervision.
6. **Standardization of Safety Rules** – Work to adopt standard safety rules and procedures
7. **Critical Mass** – extend this project to more states to get ideas and statistics.

The results of each Strategy Lab are returned to each cooperative and the statewide association for their review and to begin to institute changes that have been recommended.