Strong Commitment to Effective Continuity of Government

Dr. Kayser has been at NIST for more than 35 years and during his tenure, has demonstrated a strong commitment to improving government by encouraging employee development and growth at all levels. The results and impacts of his leadership have been felt throughout the NIST community.

His efforts to strengthen the safety culture required interaction and collaboration with leadership at all levels at NIST. Specifically, Dr. Kayser actively engages the NIST Director, the Associate Directors, and Operating Unit Directors regarding the promotion of a comprehensive strategic plan for fostering personal commitment to safety by every single staff member and at every level of management within their respective organizations. He established the NIST Executive Safety Committee to serve customers and stakeholders. The committee is a focused group that discusses and vets NIST-level policies, procedures, and other issues related to safety, health, and environment. The outcomes of the committee provided a variety of mechanisms for employee participation.

Following his appointment in June 2009 as the Chief Safety Officer, he built the Office of Safety Health Environment from the ground up, more than doubling the size of the organization that was “Safety” at NIST prior to the Boulder incident. He recruited and hired high-quality, experienced safety professionals to provide useful safety support and partnerships to the broad range of NIST’s activities in Gaithersburg and Boulder. In his role, he created a strong focus on improving and providing meaningful safety, health, and training programs. He also established mechanisms to help improve the safe operations at NIST (e.g., Safety Website, Safety Assistance Call line, on-line Safety Assistance Ticketing Center, and the Incident Reporting and Investigation System). He strived to reinforce NIST staff’s individual sense of safety ownership. Additionally, Dr. Kayser developed a NIST policy statement for health and safety and environmental management and he reinvigorated the NIST Safety Award to recognize NIST employees and organizations for substantial contributions to improving safety at NIST.

In 2007, Dr. Kayser won the Meritorious Executive Presidential Rank Award. As stated in that nomination and is worth repeating here, Dr. Kayser has demonstrated outstanding leadership of people. He has established practices of communicating openly, honestly, and in a timely manner. He has established clear succession planning, promoted and tested continuity of operations planning, and promoted training and safety throughout the organization. He has resolved difficult personnel situations which contributed to the inherited performance problems of the laboratory by working closely with the responsible individuals, managers, and DOC attorneys. He has successfully encouraged his direct reports to address performance issues openly, honestly, and fairly. His staff has been consistently supportive and responsive to his leadership, willingly making all needed and necessary changes along the way.

Through Dr. Kayser’s exceptional leadership, engagement at all levels, and diligence, the NIST safety culture has drastically improved. Specifically the roles and responsibilities regarding safety across the organization have been revamped so that they are clear and well defined.  Dr. Kayser has worked very hard, and still continues to do so, to ensure that people know what they are responsible for at all levels of NIST. Budgetary resources for safety have been identified and applied; Dr. Kayser submitted a solid and justifiable plan to increase the budget for safety at the NIST level. New talent has been attracted to a reorganized safety organization; Dr. Kayser again developed a solid and justifiable plan to reorganize the safety effort at NIST into the Office of Safety, Health, and Environment and has personally approved the hiring of each new employee to ensure that high quality individuals with the right mindset were brought into the organization. Hazards analyses have been performed throughout the organization; Dr. Kayser developed the Hazard Analysis and Control Program, deployed it to the OUs, and is now in the process of assessing the program for compliance and conformity.  This has significantly lowered the residual risk at all levels of NIST. Sixteen programs related to occupational safety, health, and environments have been written or revised, appropriately vetted through the organization, and deployed; Dr. Kayser ensures that each program meets his standards of high quality and will not adopt it otherwise. Additionally strong relationships between OSHE and the NIST Senior Executives have been developed; Dr. Kayser has worked diligently to get buy in from senior management for transforming the NIST Safety Culture.

As a result of Dr. Kayser’s actions, NIST is better positioned to prevent future safety incidents and minimize negative impacts to employees and stakeholders and maintains its solid reputation as a safe, world class laboratory.