

## Is Control Room Management Necessary?

I have been reflecting on something Marcus Aurelius wrote in his Meditations:

*Ask yourself at every moment, "Is this necessary?"*

The Control Room Management (CRM) inspection question A1-1 is about the process and criteria by which a company determines which of its facilities are control rooms and therefore has to have a CRM Plan. That is the starting point, "Is this necessary?" Some companies, even seven years after the CRM rule was enacted, are still asking if all of these requirements are necessary.

It is interesting that most do not ask if CRM is necessary at every moment. They ask, "Is this required?" again and again. And that is usually followed by, "What is the least I can do and still comply?" A better question might be, "How can I use CRM to improve my control room operations to enhance pipeline safety and to improve operational performance?"

There is another relevant question about necessity in CRM. Inspection question J1-1 asks if there are adequate CRM records management procedures that are sufficient to demonstrate compliance. This also regularly raises another question, "Is it really necessary for me to document every shift change, compliance with API recommended practices, all point-to-point verifications, use of fatigue countermeasures, alarm reviews, controller workload, change management notifications, training completion, annual testing and reviews, all CRM deviations, etc.?" This is usually followed by, "I don't want to write things down, sign my name, keep records of notifications, record the physical locations of devices, do annual reviews of effectiveness, etc.!" We hate to document and complain about its necessity.

Marcus Aurelius wrote something else that might be relevant to this current reflection:

*Search men's governing principles, and consider the wise, what they shun and what they cleave to.*

I have some governing principles, but do not consider myself wise. I shun practices that could be helpful and cleave to practices that are harmful. I wonder if I am the only human being who does so. I think not.

I wish I always did what the Bible says in Romans 12:9, "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." I am now 70 years of age, and some days I know my behaviors are not much better than they were when I was younger. I need to apply the "is it necessary" question to all areas of my life. That is a bigger issue than control room management, even if CRM is my usual focus. I do better at applying principles to CRM consulting than to my personal governance.

When it comes to CRM, we not only get our governing principles from the CRM guidance. We use control room human factors principles from other transportation modes and other industries. We seek to learn from accident reports and to provide those lessons to all of our clients and to anyone who will listen and learn. But I work with many reluctant learners.

Think about how you and your company approach CRM. What governing principles do you apply to your CRM role and responsibilities? Is the CRM program seen as a necessary and valuable program, or as an onerous burden with no benefits? When it comes to Control Room Management, what are you shunning and to what are you cleaving?