

# SAFETY TALK



## START UP SESSIONS: DO'S AND DON'TS

A corporate NINA target involves arranging NINA start-up meetings for every new project, preferably involving the client and sub-contractors. In practice, NINA can be quite a puzzle for many a project. That is why a start-up session is so important. Project managers André van der Wiel and Kees de Boer, dredging expert Daan van de Zande and SHE-Q officers Wilko Bardelmeijer, Erik van den Biggelaar and Stuart Huth discussed their experiences.



### TAKE IT SERIOUSLY

Kees: 'NINA is a wonderful program that can produce fantastic results. But it's vulnerable, too. If the start-up team doesn't take it seriously, the impact is lost. You have to take the program seriously; otherwise, NINA won't do the job it's made for. Don't let NINA look foolish!'

### GIVE EXAMPLES

André: 'You can ask participants to think about practical examples beforehand. Drawing on actual experience can fire up discussions about how to prevent these situations.'

### COMMUNICATIONS

Stuart: 'In Belfast, we work with people with all sorts of different nationalities. To prevent misunderstandings (with the client, the authorities and one another), we agreed to keep communications as clear as possible, for example by repeating a question if the answer isn't clear.'

### SHOC

Erik: 'With the NINA plan of action in mind, we introduced the SHOC (Safety Hazard Observation) card and explained why it was important. Proper feedback motivates people and raises safety awareness. It's a good idea to discuss this at the start-up meeting.'

### IDENTIFY RISKS

Wilko: 'The start-up meeting makes NINA real. During the NINA courses, we explain about the Values and Rules. But the projects themselves decide how to put them into practice. Within the guidelines, implementation can vary from project to project. The start-up meeting is the perfect time to have an open discussion about the main risks involved in a project, how to deal with them, and to talk about initiatives to keep NINA on the agenda. The start-up meeting is a team



effort. The group formulates its own objectives and gets behind them.'

### INVOLVE HIGHER MANAGEMENT

Stuart: 'At our start-up meeting in Belfast, Jaap Verdoorn introduced NINA, and he emphasized the importance of feedback regardless of who is involved in the discussion. That demonstrates the commitment of management and it generates added value.'

André: 'Haico Wevers and Jaap Verdoorn were at our projects in Seaton and Felixstowe respectively. They were actively involved in the discussions, demonstrating that NINA is taken seriously at the top of the organization. That impressed everybody.'

### TIMING

Wilko: 'Timing is important. You should arrange a start-up meeting when a project team has been established and got into its stride: a week or two after a project kicks off. That's when everything is starting to fall into place and the message gets across better.'

### LEARN FROM EACH OTHER

Stuart: 'The NINA program is never finished. During our start-up meeting in Belfast, our sub-contractor's employees were enthusiastic. Their input was a genuine boost for the start-

Well begun is half done. That certainly applies to rolling out NINA on projects. During the NINA start-up meeting, the project team gives concrete examples of the role of NINA Values and Rules on the project. But how do you organize a good start-up? A practical review of 'best practices'.

START UP SESSION  
The Wasit / Saffaniyah project. Left: the commitment poster of the project.

to operate night and day. But the shift bosses aren't there at night. Is that safe? The NINA process means we come across this sort of dilemma more and more. What the group really wants to know is: how serious is Boskalis about safety, really? The project team responded by suggesting that work during the first week should be during the day only, with the complete crew. The dilemma turned out to be a way of generating energy!'

### BE CONVINCED YOURSELF!

Kees: 'Make sure you are enthusiastic about NINA yourself before you start talking to other people. You can only pass on the message if NINA really is "your thing"!'  
Erik: 'It is vital to believe in NINA yourself and you have to make it clear to people how important it is for them to get home safely at the end of the working day.'

up meeting. So we can learn from the people we work with and make ongoing improvements to NINA. It's important to remember that we don't know everything.'

### TALK, TALK AND TALK AGAIN

Erik: 'For Boskalis, it's important to get past cultural differences. We now think talking about safety is natural. But in many countries, people are used to thinking in more hierarchical terms. People are reluctant to criticize managers: it could lose them their job. You can eliminate concerns like that only by the talking to people. Not just during the start-up meeting, but after it as well! Make it clear that things work the other way round when it comes to safety: that we expect people to think pro-actively. We have to get the message across that a critical attitude is to everybody's benefit and that a shared sense of responsibility makes the company better. How do you do that? Talk, talk and talk again!'

### BE PRACTICAL!

Daan: 'You need to be open-minded about the dilemmas people face; you have to be practical. During the start-up in Suriname, the crew members had a lot to say: *You want us*

### 5 TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL NINA START-UP SESSION

#### ATMOSPHERE AND CONDITIONS

Make sure in advance that there is enough time for debate during the start-up meeting. Give the participants the opportunity to talk about their experiences and knowledge in a relaxed way. That is good for the atmosphere during the session. You should also pick a good location and the right time of day. Things should be serious, not overly formal.

#### PREPARATION

Make sure that the participants know something about the NINA basics before the meeting and that they have had a good project introduction. Ask a SHE-Q coordinator for help.

#### DO IT TOGETHER

A NINA start-up meeting is not a 'one-man show'. Make sure that as many members of the project team as possible participate actively in the preparations and the discussion.

#### BEST PRACTICES

Learn about the goals of other projects. Take a look at the list of 'Best Practices' in the NINA start-up guidelines. And check whether there is anything that could be useful for your team.

#### FOLLOW-UP

Keep your NINA plan of action on the agenda of regular consultation meetings. You should also make sure that the project budget allows for two or more follow-up sessions on the lines of the start-up meeting. Put aside time and money for these sessions.