

Swissgrid Safety Culture Ladder

Questions and answers

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1 Safety Culture Ladder

Question	Answer
What is the Safety Culture Ladder?	The Safety Culture Ladder (SCL) is based on a five-level maturity model; it is a certifiable method for advancing safety culture in organisations across a wide variety of industries where physical safety (occupational safety and health protection) is exposed to a heightened risk. It focuses on continuously developing the safety-related conduct of all managers, employees and contractual partners (service providers). Although the SCL was primarily designed to further develop occupational safety, the basic principle can be applied to all safety-relevant areas. Safety culture is developed according to five levels: The more pronounced the safety culture of an organisation, the higher the level.
Where does the Safety Culture Ladder come from?	The SCL method has its origins in the Dutch rail vehicle industry. Since 1 July 2016, the SCL has been a product of the NEN (Nederlandse Norm). NEN is the SCL's international management institute.
Which countries is the Safety Culture Ladder already being used in?	The SCL has already become established in several European countries (including the Netherlands, Germany, France, Belgium, Austria and Denmark) as a certifiable method for further developing safety culture. In the Netherlands and Germany, the SCL is integrated into calls for tender from the transmission system operator TenneT as a requirement for service providers. In addition, the Dutch construction industry has made a joint commitment to the SCL. In Switzerland, Swissgrid is acting as a pioneer.
How is the Safety Culture Ladder put into practice?	Introducing the SCL can be divided into the following steps:

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1. **Self-assessment:** It all starts with a self-assessment to determine the current maturity of the safety culture.
 2. **Gap analysis:** Gaps are then identified between the prevailing maturity level and the targeted maturity level of the safety culture.
 3. **Action plan:** An action plan is created based on the gap analysis. The action plan contains specific measures aimed at further developing the safety culture and attaining the targeted level.
 4. **Certification audit:** Depending on the chosen SCL variant, the organisation receives a certificate or a statement. This is followed by a joint review over the next two years, with the aim of ensuring that the safety culture continues to evolve.
 5. **Ongoing cultural development:** Implementing measures from the action plan initiates the process of cultural change. This process continues after the certification audit. Sustainable changes in the safety culture can be seen after about two years.

How can one characterise the five levels of the Safety Culture Ladder?

Level 1 Indifferent

- «Safety is not an issue for us»
- The management and the employees do not take any responsibility.
- They believe that incidents happen purely by chance.

Level 2 Reactive

- «We take action after incidents»
- Management is forced to take action as a result of incidents. Responsibility is shifted.
- Employees see themselves as victims and do not feel responsible.

Level 3 Rule-driven

- «We follow safety rules»
- Relevant safety regulations have been established, but are not yet consistently applied. Safety is still predominantly seen as a management task. On the positive side, there is an awareness of safety.

Level 4 Anticipatory

- «We identify risks at an early stage»
- Safety has a high priority and is rooted in operational processes.
- Supervisors encourage and praise safe work.
- Employees take responsibility for themselves.

Level 5 Value-creating

- «Security is deeply embedded in our thinking and behaviour»
- Safety is an integral part of operational processes and receives the highest priority at all times.
- Everyone takes responsibility for themselves and others and are convinced that effective improvements in the area of safety can only be achieved together.

What are the six corporate aspects of the Safety Culture Ladder?

The SCL assesses six aspects of a company. These provide an overall picture of an organisation's safety culture.

1. **Leadership and participation:** What is management's attitude towards safety? How are employees involved in safety aspects?
 2. **Corporate policy and strategy:** What are an organisation's safety objectives? To what extent has a strategy been defined in this respect? What budget is available?
 3. **Organisation and contractual partners:** How is safety rooted in the organisation and what importance does safety have when it comes to selecting and cooperating with contractual partners?
 4. **Workplace and procedures:** How is the topic of safety rooted in daily practice (e.g. risk assessments, etc.)? How is safety considered in the planning of the work activities?
 5. **Deviations and communication:** How does the organisation that it learns the most from (near) incidents or uncertain situations? How are incidents communicated?
 6. **Audit and statistics:** Are managers regularly present on site and do they actively demand safety-conscious behaviour from employees? Is safety-relevant data analysed systematically in order to identify negative developments in the area of safety at an early stage and make it possible to derive appropriate measures from these?
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What aspects does the Safety Culture Ladder evaluate, and how?	The safety culture is assessed according to the SCL's five-level maturity model. An audit team assesses the organisation's performance against six corporate aspects. These aspects are further subdivided into a total of 18 company characteristics. Within these characteristics, open and closed questions form the assessment basis for the safety culture in an organisation.
How long does a Safety Culture Ladder certification take and how long is it valid?	The duration of the pure certification audit depends on the size of the organisation, but it usually takes several days. The certification is updated after three years. In the intervening years, recertification audits are carried out. Since the process is one of cultural change, it takes several years to truly develop a culture.
Is there an overview of organisations that have already introduced the Safety Culture Ladder?	The list of already certified organisations can be viewed at: www.safetymcultureladder.com
What makes the Safety Culture Ladder different from other certifications?	The special thing about the SCL is the word «culture»: The focus is on the cultural aspects, hence questions of «how» take centre stage. How is safety embodied in daily practice? How do managers and employees think and behave regarding the issue of safety? Another important distinguishing feature is the way in which the audit is carried out. Behaviour-based audits are carried out within the framework of the SCL; these focus on the behaviour and awareness of managers and employees.

2 Safety culture at Swissgrid

What does Swissgrid mean by safety culture?	Swissgrid defines safety culture as a common understanding and awareness of the topic of safety that is shared by all managers and employees in an organisation. This includes, for example, the definition of responsibilities, regular training and further education as well as appropriate handling of incidents. A positive safety culture requires all managers and employees in an organisation to have a questioning attitude, conduct themselves in a safety-driven manner and communicate openly with regard to safety-related issues. Safety Culture forms an integral part of the corporate culture.
Why is Swissgrid introducing the Safety Culture Ladder for itself and its service providers?	As the national grid operator, Swissgrid is responsible for the operation and safety of the Swiss transmission grid. As a critical infrastructure, safety always has the highest priority at Swissgrid – for people, facilities and the environment.

Safety is a key element for well-being and development. The SCL will initiate a process to gradually increase safety and enable our managers, employees and service providers to build up and expand their knowledge and understanding of this topic. This will turn them into ambassadors of our vision of a safe working world.

What goals is Swissgrid pursuing by further developing the safety culture?

Swissgrid is a critical infrastructure, upon which high safety and reliability demands are placed.

Safety is a continuous process rather than a state. It requires the safety culture to be systematically and sustainably further developed. When it comes to achieving this, the SCL method has proved its worth in other countries and in other organisations. For this reason, Swissgrid has decided to introduce SCL in order to further develop its safety culture.

Another objective pursued by introducing the SCL is the inclusion of external service providers. This means that SCL will become a specific requirement to be taken into account during the procurement process and will motivate service providers to actively develop their own safety culture. This approach will ensure joint value creation in the long term.

When will Swissgrid be certified for the first time in accordance with the Safety Culture Ladder?

Swissgrid is aiming for Level 3 certification in the first quarter of 2022. This will be an important step towards the further development of a positive safety culture.

What do the red brackets stand for?

The red brackets are a symbol of Swissgrid's safety culture. The brackets symbolise the integral consideration of the issue of safety. Texts, images or pictograms within the brackets indicate topic-specific content.

3 Information for service providers

Which service providers does Swissgrid involve in the process?

In principle, safety plays a key role in all services provided for Swissgrid. You can find out whether and for which service providers SCL will be relevant in the future in the corresponding guide for service providers. In particular, work entailing high risks in terms of occupational safety and work with a high volume of orders (tender invitation and open procurement procedures) are decisive for the introduction of SCL.

Which Safety Culture Ladder variants are relevant for Swissgrid and its service providers?

There are four SCL variants in total, although only the following two are relevant for Swissgrid and its service providers (see the guide for service providers):

SCL: This variant includes a 100% audit in the first year and a 40% follow-up audit in each of the two subsequent years. The organisation receives a certificate if the audit is successful. This variant is relevant for organisations that carry out activities for Swissgrid with increased risks in terms of occupational safety.

SCL Light: This variant includes a 40% audit in the first year and an audit of the action plan in each of the two subsequent years. This variant is relevant for organisations that carry out activities for Swissgrid with medium risks in terms of occupational safety. This variant concludes with a statement as part of the auditing process.

What kind of effort should service providers expect?

There is no general answer to this question. Internal and external effort must be considered here.

In particular, internal effort is required to make HR and time resources available to support the change process and thus to drive cultural development forward. It should also be ensured here that the self-assessment is processed and that any gaps identified in the self-assessment are addressed. This effort varies greatly from organisation to organisation, as both the existing safety culture and the size and complexity of the organisation play a significant role.

In particular, external costs are incurred for external certification. The duration of the audits is linked to the size of an organisation (own staff and temporary staff). Calculation example: 100 employees of an organisation = six person-days as an audit (an audit is always carried out by a team of auditors consisting of two people = three days on site). Furthermore, the effort depends on the required SCL variant (SCL or SCL Light) and possible support from an external consulting company.
