

## Safety Culture Ladder NEN

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Subject	Statement Interpretation step 5 Safety Culture Ladder

## Interpretation step5 Safety Culture Ladder

### 1 Introduction

No companies currently hold a step 5 certificate. Since the development and launch of the Safety Culture Ladder in 2012, many organisations have gained certification for the underlying steps. This has led to a more concrete understanding of a step 5 culture than when the Safety Culture Ladder was first developed years ago. It is essential for the Safety Culture Ladder that companies which receive a step 5 certification accurately represent our idea of a suitable organisation in terms of safety culture.

The Safety Culture Ladder is a system in development within a dynamic environment which is expanding to new sectors and other countries. With a broad group of stakeholders, subdivided into various committees, the certification scheme is continually optimised and updated.

A discussion was launched in late 2017 concerning whether the Safety Culture Ladder contained sufficient footing in its current form for auditors and organisations to determine an organisation's capacity for achieving a step 5 culture. Based on these talks, the Safety Culture Ladder's Board of Stakeholders (BoS) concluded on 1 March 2018 that the auditor guidelines for step 5 require further development. This includes a general description which encompasses the identity of a step 5 organisation, clear and uniform definitions and increased clarity of the auditor guidelines. The BoS also concluded that until the step 5 image can be further solidified, certification according to the current requirements is not sensible. **To this end, the BoS decided to temporarily suspend step 5 audits.** While the BoS was sufficiently aware of the levity of this measure, they were confident that a brief cessation was advisable and responsible.

### 2 Step 5 interpretation request

The BoS requested the Committee of Experts (CoE) to submit an interpretation of the auditor guidelines in respect of step 5 culture by 31 December 2018. This to complement the Safety Culture Ladder Certification Scheme and Safety Culture Ladder Manual.

This request only pertained to a further interpretation for step 5; no amendments and/or supplements to the requirements were solicited. The base position is that the image formed in the Certification Scheme and Safety Culture Ladder Manual about step 5 culture is essentially correct, but that the auditor guidelines require further development and clarity.

As the Safety Culture Ladder Knowledge Partners in the Knowledge Platform thoroughly brainstormed over step 5, the group was invited to incorporate their ideas into the further interpretation of step 5 where possible.

### **3 Development of step 5 interpretation**

Based on the various input and commentary sessions with groups including the knowledge partners and Certification Authorities, the CoE developed the further interpretation for step 5. Per January 2019, the BoS (Board of Stakeholders) documented the further development of the step 5 interpretation in a separate interpretation document. This document contains an elaboration of the general step 5 description, additional terms and definitions and further clarification of the criteria and auditor guidelines for step 5. Additional specification has also been provided to identify applicable qualification targets. Requirements for step 5 have been included for information purposes alongside the further step 5 interpretation in the form of an explanatory note for the criteria and auditor guidelines..

### **4 Implementation**

Step 5 certification processes may resume per 1 July 2019. In the interim period, the Certification Authorities, auditors and organisations will prepare themselves based on the published interpretation document. Experienced auditors must obtain additional qualification before conducting step 4 and 5 audits. To facilitate this, NEN will organise intervision sessions for step 5. During these sessions, the (experienced) auditors will gather with a representative group from the CoE to discuss the content of the interpretation document and exchange ideas and experiences to gain a collective image of step 5 organisations. Session outcomes will be recorded and published by NEN and will form the basis for the future Masterclass step 4/5.

### **5 Further development**

The publication and implementation of the step 5 interpretation is an initial move in the ongoing improvement of the Safety Culture Ladder. In collaboration with the broad group of stakeholders, commitment to the development and optimisation of the Safety Culture Ladder based on new experiences and insights will continue. In addition to further defining the auditor guidelines, this may also lead to further sharpening of the requirements to achieve clearer distinction between the steps within the Safety Culture Ladder.

### **More information**

For further questions and/or comments concerning the step 5 interpretation document or the Safety Culture Ladder in general, please contact:

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