

ISO surveillance audit

NAL's ISO 9001:2000 quality management system (QMS) went through the 5th surveillance audit on 30 June 2006. The next audit, in December 2006, will pertain to re-certification.

Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance (LRQA) auditors, in the concluding meeting presided over by the Director, observed that NAL's QMS has further matured. They complimented NAL for the high degree of audit compliances and praised the way quality related records are being managed. They had a word of appreciation for the world class R&D and service activities of various NAL divisions and sections.

Dr M R Madhava

A naïve reaction to ISO 9001:2000



Last Tuesday two senior quality experts from Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance made an introductory presentation at NAL on ISO 9001:2000 - the new international quality management standard which is expected to take over from the ISO 9001 standard (introduced in 1994) in a phased manner starting from November 2000. As readers of the *Pasteboard* are probably aware, NAL expects to become an ISO 9001 certified Lab this year and has put in a significant effort over the past 18 months to obtain this certification. Many of us involved in this effort were therefore quite curious to know more about ISO 9001:2000 and, more specifically, how the proposed modifications would affect the ongoing effort. Although the Lloyd's presentations were lucid, no clear picture emerged about the likely *specific* changes. Actually it is still early days; the final ISO 9001:2000 documents are only expected to be out in April 2000 and new certification exercises won't start till the end of 2000. NAL is therefore likely to choose the more pragmatic course: push ahead for an early ISO 9001 certification, and wait till the complete ISO 9001:2000 picture emerges. Since a transition time of up to three years is likely to be allowed, this approach is further vindicated. But the ISO 9001:2000 preview still contained interesting pointers: the serious effort to involve the "top management" in the exercise, the emphasis on effecting and measuring "continual quality improvement", the greater focus on "customer loyalty", the scrapping of ISO 9002 and ISO 9003 certifications, more recommendations on "resource management" and the inclusion of "legal issues and its ramifications". Indeed it makes one wonder: are these only *quality improvement* recommendations or full-fledged *enterprise management* prescriptions? In fact, one's first reaction was to ask the Lloyd's experts if the quality lobby was trying to take over all the management functions. I don't think the experts found my question very amusing; they coldly (and quite correctly) told me that it was finally up to the top management to formulate its quality policy and it was under no compulsion to opt for ISO 9001:2000. Actually I have no objection to the quality lobby trying to aggressively sell its prescription. Every other lobby seems to be doing the same thing: the IT lobby (with, e.g., ERP solutions), the HRD lobby etc. But, in my naivette, there is still the sneaking suspicion that quality service agencies will benefit more from ISO 9001:2000 than the quality movement itself. It can be argued that it is not for NAL to worry too much about these questions. In fact NAL Director Dr T S Prahlad indicated as much in his remarks at the end of the presentation. Dr Prahlad said that he wasn't "too concerned about labels: whether ISO 9001 or ISO 9001:2000. I can see that the ISO exercise will impart more discipline and more method in our R&D management. In the fiercely competitive environment which NAL will encounter in the future I have no doubt that we will need such rigour and such an attitude".

Srinivas Bhogle

NAL is now an ISO 9001 organisation



NAL formally received its ISO 9001 certificate on 15 November 2000. At a well-attended function in the Director's Conference Hall, Mr S K Shukla, Head, Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance Centre for India and Sri Lanka handed over the coveted ISO certificate to Dr T S Prahlad, Director, NAL.

Getting ready for the "ISO 9001 exam"



As per current projections, NAL hopes to become an ISO 9001 certified Lab by end-August 2000. Auditors from Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance, which has been identified as the third party registering agency, are, mid-August, expected to spend about a week going around NAL before they pronounce their verdict. A mood akin to exam fever is now beginning to build up on the NAL campuses as the final audit date approaches. One of the preparation strategies to face such tests is to compare notes, and seek advice, from individuals or teams who have already passed the (ISO 9001) test. We were therefore delighted when Dr V Prakash, Director, CFTRI (CFTRI is now an ISO-9001 certified institute) most graciously agreed to meet NAL's ISO 9001 Management Review Committee on 23 May 2000 to make a presentation and share his experiences on how to pass the ISO exam. "What are the auditors really looking for when they go around the Lab?", we asked Dr Prakash. "They are really looking for commitment. It doesn't matter too much if there is an occasional non-compliance observed; the auditor is really looking for that gleam of commitment", he said. "Should there be an atmosphere of ISO fever in the course of the auditors' visit?", Mr G Rajendra wanted to know. Dr Prakash said that it should be a business-as-usual ambience, although he confessed that, as Director CFTRI, the "fever raged within" while the auditors were around. "The best strategy really is to be '1000% certain' of passing the test. That means several rounds of intense internal audits and serious brainstorming among small concerned groups", Dr Prakash said. And "don't call the auditors till you are ready to receive them", was his parting advice. *Srinivas Bhogle*

A report on the first meeting discussing ISO-certification for NAL

Metallurgical and Engineering Consultants (India) Ltd.[MECON], Ranchi, is likely to be the consultancy firm helping NAL with its ambitious plans for ISO-certification. In this connection, Mr P Dutta, AGM (Tech), MECON, Ranchi, visited some of the major facilities of NAL on the 25-26 March 1998. A meeting was held on 25 March, at 3.00 pm in the Director's Conference Hall with all the Heads /Jt.Heads /Dy.Heads of Divisions /Units /Sections to hear Mr Dutta and chalk out a plan of action. The Director noted that NAL was moving into the 21st century with a number of tasks and projects where total quality management is of utmost importance. He said that ISO-9000 is an accepted framework for achieving this. Some of the CSIR labs like CFRI and CMERI have already achieved ISO certification while some others like NML were on their way to the same. VSSC is in the process of being certified in a very short time from now. He concluded that it has been decided that NAL will adopt a quality policy of its own and work aggressively towards obtaining ISO certification in the next 12 to 18 months. With these few words, the Director introduced Mr Dutta to the gathering. Mr Dutta made it clear from the beginning that he would like the session to be interactive in nature and encouraged the members to query him on any doubts they have. The result was a lively 40 minutes when the top-level management of NAL sized up the enormous tasks ahead of them in the form of pointed questions to Mr Dutta. The first doubt expressed by the members was whether the nature of work undertaken in NAL warrants 9001 certification or 9002. Mr Dutta explained that being a R&D laboratory, NAL would be certified as ISO 9001 for the simple reason that NAL designs most of the products it produces and rarely borrows design or technologies from external agencies. It is often the case that external organizations which borrow technologies developed by NAL go on to be ISO certified. Some members wanted to know if that was not proof enough of NAL's capabilities. Mr Dutta cleared the misconception in these people's minds saying that, the ISO certification was a proof of the efficiency of the procedures followed in an organization and has nothing to do with its products. Mr Dutta also briefly addressed one more school of thought, which was of the opinion that the ISO 9000 yoke would choke the organization's productivity with its stringent documentation procedures. Mr Dutta drew attention to his own parent organization MECON, which was ISO certified and whose productivity he said only increased substantially after certification. When asked about a conservative deadline before which certification could be achieved, Mr Dutta said that NAL could be certified to be of ISO-9001 standards in 12 months time. Mr Dutta also went on to make a small presentation on the major phases through which the organization would pass for successful implementation of

the standards. The Director has now formed a committee under the Chairmanship of Dr B R Somashekar, Adv(Tech) to co-ordinate the ISO certification process from NAL's side.

Naveen Kumar K, NALTech

Meeting on ISO-9000 certification

An important meeting was held at the NAL Director's Conference Hall on 25 March 1998. The subject: ISO-9000 certification for NAL. The speaker: Mr P Dutta, AGM (Technology), MECON, Ranchi. Nearly 40 NAL scientists attended the meeting which featured an introductory presentation by Mr Dutta, followed by a wide-ranging question-answer session. In his opener, Dr T S Prahlad, Director, expressed the hope that NAL would be ISO-9000 certified within a year. "If NAL is to market its technologies successfully, we need ISO-9000 certification", Dr Prahlad said. Mr Dutta responded to the questions posed with aplomb. Samplers of questions: what's the difference between ISO 9001, 9002 and 9003?; do the stringent documentation requirements lead to a loss of productivity?; what are the costs involved?; which are the accredited certifying agencies? etc. The meeting was therefore a useful opportunity to learn more about ISO-9000 and also a pointer to the winds of change blowing across CSIR.

SB with inputs from Naveen Kumar K of NALTech.
