

Avoiding complacency: Leadership vigilance in the face of risks arising from major hazards

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***“We cannot change the human condition,
but we can change the conditions under
which humans work.”***

James Reason

NORMALISATION OF DEVIANCE

Small deviations become accepted.
Repeated success reinforces confidence.
Yesterday's exception becomes today's normal.

Have you noticed that process beginning?

Endlessly
curious.....



Lessons learned when things go wrong



Complacency is not about the absence of concern - it is the gradual normalisation of the risks

Leadership determines what receives attention... and what receives attention improves.

KNOWN CONCERNS FRAGMENTED ACCOUNTABILITY

Every major disaster begins with organisations believing that what is happening today is acceptable

“How confident are we that concerns would reach people with both the authority and determination to act.....?”



Buncefield Twenty years on





Principles of Process Safety Leadership

The Process Safety Leadership Group (PSLG) is committed to improving process safety across the UK. We believe that to achieve this, industry leaders have a key role to play and must commit to establishing the following principles of process safety management in each business:

- Process safety leadership is at the core of managing a major hazard and ensuring that risks are effectively managed;
- Process safety leadership requires board level involvement and competence. For organisations located outside the UK then the responsibility to show this leadership is the most senior UK managers;
- Process safety management does not happen by chance and requires constant improvement;
- The promotion of process safety leadership is essential to set a positive safety culture throughout the organisation;
- A skilled workforce is needed in the promotion and achievement of good process safety performance;
- Process safety performance based on both leading and lagging indicators is essential to ensure business risks are being effectively managed;
- Process safety performance information provides important public information on the management of risks by an organisation; and
- Learning across industry sectors, and learning and implementing lessons from incidents in other organisations, are important to maintain the currency of process safety leadership and competence.



- ✓ Process safety leadership
- ✓ Organisational competence
- ✓ Board oversight
- ✓ Learning across the sector

Remain vigilant - Repeatedly take stock.

	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

The Accident that Didn't Happen

"What's that smell?"



"It's just a small leak."



**A management system failure
uncovered**



A major accident prevented

What are we becoming comfortable with?



AN UNCERTAIN AND CHALLENGING FUTURE

**PROTECTING PEOPLE
AND PLACES** 

Cyber security

Net Zero

Decarbonisation

Embrace
change without
losing sight of
the risks you
already carry

New Fuels

??????

Geopolitical

Artificial
Intelligence

LEADING THROUGH CHANGE

Treat organisational change like plant and technology change

Before the change

Structure
Resources
Roles
Responsibilities



**A
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After the change

Memory retained
Ownership clear
Challenge protected
Competence assured

HOW ARE YOU DOING?

If a major accident occurred tomorrow.....?

What would an inquiry say we failed to recognise – despite having the opportunity to see it today?

**Do you know?
Are you looking?
Who would act?**

Leadership is not measured by how effectively we respond to obvious problems.

Leadership is measured by how quickly we recognise subtle ones.

RISK ASSESSMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Risk assessment underpins every leadership decision

- Do you know where your vulnerabilities lie?
- Would an inquiry conclude the warning signs were visible?
- What might you be failing to recognise today?
- How confident are you that your assessment reflects reality?

“If a major accident occurred tomorrow, what would a future inquiry say about your organisation’s approach to risk assessment?”

Good risk assessment is not a paperwork exercise. It is one of the clearest indicators of whether an organisation truly understands the risks it carries.

**CDOIF Major Hazard Risk Assessment Guidance -
Coming Soon**

WHAT ARE WE BECOMING COMFORTABLE WITH?

- ✓ Engineering builds barriers
- ✓ Management maintains barriers
- ✓ Leadership decides whether barriers matter BEFORE they are tested

Thank You