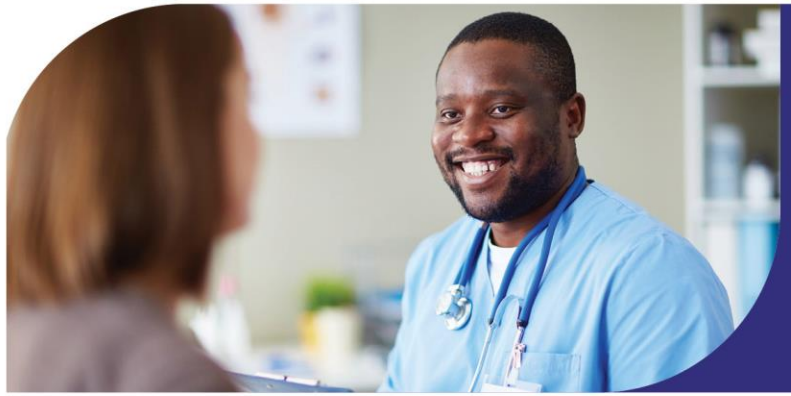
HSA

An tÚdarás Sláinte agus Sábháilteachta
Health and Safety Authority

Influencing Safety Culture at Work



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Outline

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- What is safety culture?
- What role has safety culture had in accidents?
- What are key influences on safety culture?
  - Management Commitment
  - Communication
  - Organisational Learning
- What can you do to influence safety culture?

Safety Culture

*"The product of **individual and group values, attitudes, perceptions, competencies and patterns of behaviour** that can determine the commitment to, and the style and proficiency of an organisation's health and safety management system".*

Health and Safety Commission Advisory Committee on the safety of nuclear installations (1993)

How people feel

Psychological aspects

Can be described as the 'safety climate' of the organisation, which is concerned with individual and group values, attitudes and perceptions.

What people do

Behavioural aspects

Safety-related actions and behaviours

What the organisation has

Situational aspects

Policies, procedures, regulation, organisational structures, and the management systems

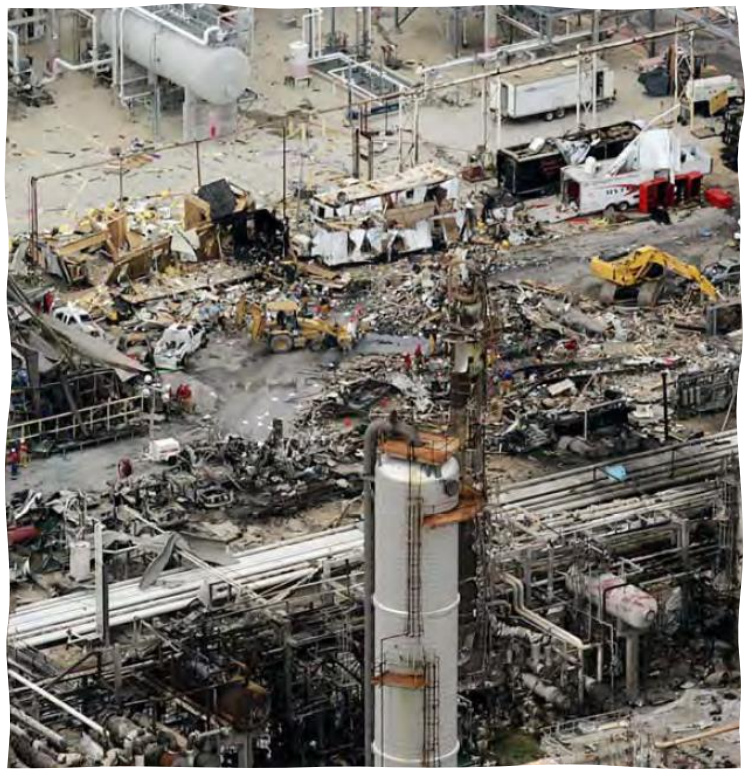
(Health and Safety Executive, 2005; Cooper, 2000)

Visible
'the way we do things around here'
Formal team processes
Documented health and safety procedures
Visible behaviours
Stated values – what we say we care about
'the way we really do things around here'
Less visible
Informal team processes
Actual management priorities
Silent rules
Unwritten rules
Lived values – what we actually care about

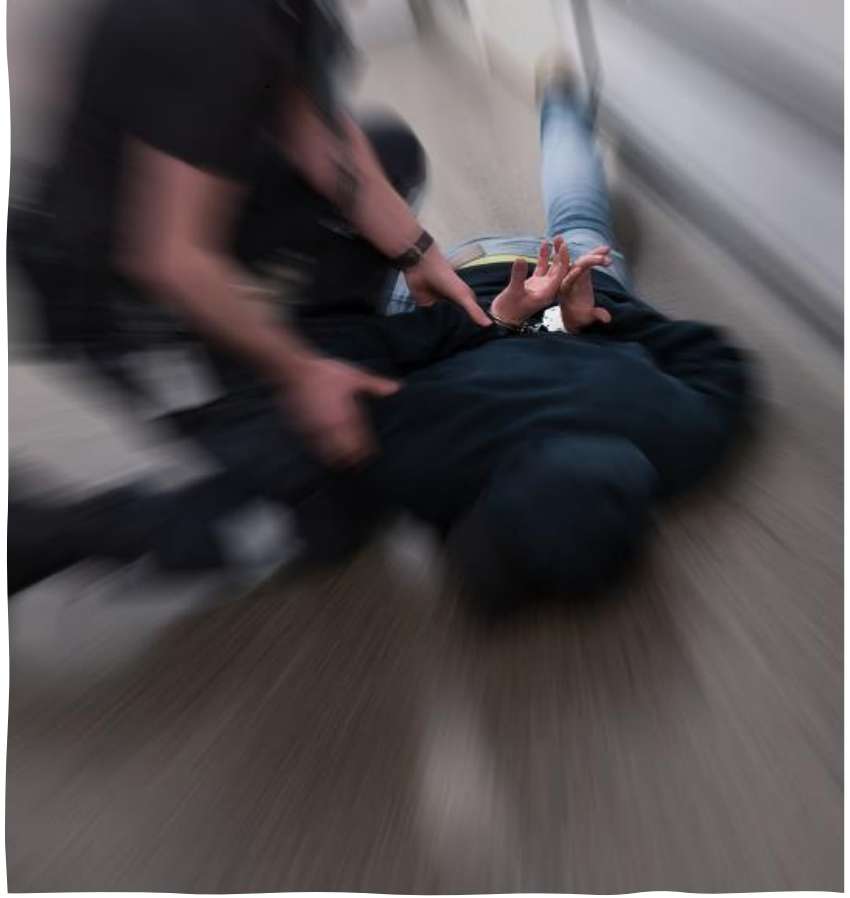
Safety culture and accidents

Buncefield, UK, 2005.
"…*keeping the process operating*
(COMAH Competent Authority, 2011)

Space Shuttle Challenger, 1986
"The Silent Safety Program…"
(Presidential Commission Report, 1986)



Texas City, 2005
"..BP lacked a learning culture"
(US CSB Investigation Report, 2007)



Accident Investigation Case Study

Health and Safety Executive (2024) Annual Science Review

29 June 2015 – Van-based officer, asked to assist with prisoner movement from Blackfriars Crown Court, London

Prevailing Culture in June 2015

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Long standing issues:

X inattention to communication of safety critical information

X time pressures, business priorities

A second incident in June 2016

(IOSH, 2023: https://www.ioshmagazine.com/2023/06/07/serco-fined-ps225m-after-custody-officer-sustains-fatal-brain-injuries)

Management Commitment

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- ✓ Visibility
- ✓ Response
- ✓ Balance of health and safety and organisational goals
- ✓ Resources and support

Safety Critical Communication

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Clarity

Quality

Timing

"The quality of a conversation influences the quality of decision making which influences the quality of the outcome."

(John O'Leary on Space Shuttle Challenger, 2015)

Organisational Learning

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- ✓ Analysis of incidents
- ✓ Focus on underlying causes
- ✓ Looking beyond human error - systems approach
- ✓ Timely feedback and action

"..Learning means changing.."

Chartered Institute of Ergonomics and Human Factors (2020) White Paper: Learning from Adverse Events. https://ergonomics.org.uk/resource/learning-from-adverse-events.html

Influencing Safety Culture

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- Manage expectations
- Engage at all levels
- Communicate as you go
- Capture what people feel and do, what the organisation has
- Focus on one topic

Key Messages

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- Safety culture > what people feel, do, what the organization has
- Management commitment, communication, organisational learning
- Intervention > Ensure engagement at all levels, ongoing communication; focus on one topic

References

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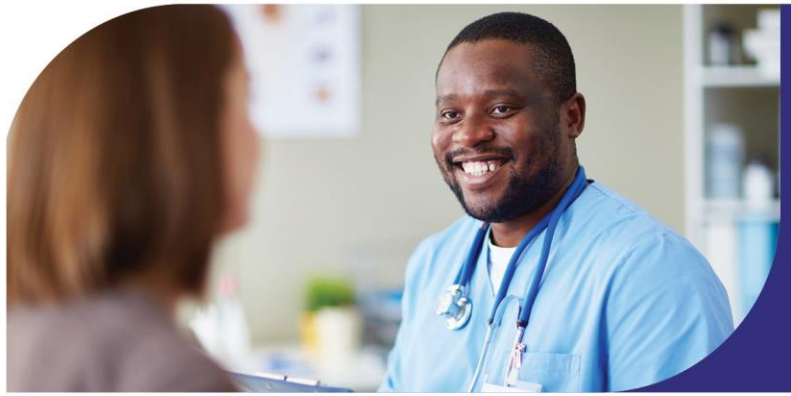
US Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board (2007) Investigation Report. Refinery Explosion and Fire. https://www.csb.gov/bp-america-texas-city-refinery-explosion/



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Go raibh maith agaibh

Thank you

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