

Preface

People at work have experience, expectations, ambitions and skills. The problem with people is that they are inconsistent, they make mistakes, forget things, don't pay attention, don't understand things quite correctly and get their priorities wrong. In some cases, they wilfully disregard the safety rules, putting themselves and others at risk.

The last decade has seen considerable attention paid to the human factors aspects of health and safety at work. Much of this increased emphasis has been brought about as a result of the contribution of human failure to disasters, such as those at Bhopal in India, Moorgate, Kegworth and Longford, Victoria, South Australia, together with the Piper Alpha incident.

'Human factors' is an area of study concerned with people, the organizations they work for and the work they undertake. It is also concerned with communication systems within organizations and the training systems and procedures in operation, all of which are directed at preventing human error.

This book is about human factors and the behavioural aspects of safety. It examines psychological factors such as attitude, motivation and perception, theories of accident causation and the relationship of human reliability to accidents, together with the increasingly significant areas of ergonomics and stress at work.

One of the principal objectives of any organization is that of developing and promoting the right safety culture, an aspect which requires a significant human factors input if it is to be successful. This book looks at this aspect, along with important features in the development of a safety culture, such as communication, training and interpersonal skills.

I should stress that this book is not written by a psychologist for psychologists! It is targeted at health and safety practitioners, HR managers, trainers and managers in general, who need to have a broad understanding of the subject, together with those studying for NEBOSH and other qualifications in occupational health and safety.

I hope that all those who use this book will find it helpful.

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