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# **Incident Investigations: Barriers to Improvement**

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# My Background

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- 15 yrs - Incident Reporting Systems
- 10 yrs - Incident Investigation
- 8 yrs - Started HSE Risk Management Co
- 4 yrs - Teaching Incident Investigation
- Worked in US, Canada, South Africa, SE Asia, Australia & NZ
- Mining, Oil & Gas, Shipping, Rail, Defence etc.
- **SAME ISSUES – DIFFERENT LOCATIONS**

# Incident Investigation

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- Investigation is an **Art** not a Science.
- **No single approach** will work in all situations.
- Incident = Any outcome that is not **tolerable**.
- Only **you determine** what is tolerable.
- There are many barriers to improving incident investigation
- Improvements in the **process** and how we share, learn from and retain **knowledge**

# Attitudes

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- ***“I’ll wait to see what the boss says before deciding to investigate. Yes – it was an incident but the client isn’t worried about it. We’ll probably get rid of the guy because he’s been involved in a few incidents”***
- **Manager, Drilling Services Company, Australia. 2009**

# Attitudes

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- ***“Yes they tell us we are working towards Zero Incidents but I haven’t seen it working anywhere. Basically if someone screws up I’ll get rid of them. That usually sends the message. We don’t have the time or resources to investigate every incident and we can’t wrap them in cotton wool.”***
- **Rig Company Man, Operator, Australia. 2008**

# Attitudes

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- ***“It’s not unusual for us to lose power completely. I’ve been here 2 years and it happens all the time. I don’t see a problem if we can get it back quickly. We always record it in our trips log.”***
- **Maintenance Superintendent, Offshore Facility, Australia. 2009.**

# Efficiency/Effectiveness

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- Most of the **focus** is on **efficiency**
- Get the report out so we can share the **lessons learned** and move on
- **Effectiveness** is usually **forgotten**
- How do we achieve a **balance**?

# Planning

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- The **scope** is **poorly defined**
- Lack of **discussion, agreement and feedback** between **Sponsor and Lead Investigator**
- Facilitator is not **Independent**
- Investigation Team **wrong size or mix**
- **Solo** investigations encourage **bias**
- **Too few** Investigators **trained or experienced**
- **No Investigation Toolkit**



# Gathering Information

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- Too few trained to **Interview**
- **Wrong people** conducting Interviews
- No Investigation **Checklists**
- Too much talking and not enough **Listening**
- **Documentation** difficult to locate and store
- **Biased Investigators** only collect what they deem **relevant**
- Not gathering **enough** info = **Lack of Depth**

# Analysis

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- **Some analysis tools/methodologies are incomplete:**
  - **Rely** on experience
  - **Not repeatable/defendable**
  - Encourage **Assumptions, Opinion and Bias**
- Analysis is a **Team sport**

# Reporting

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- Those involved are **not Briefed** prior to presentation of findings
  - *Nobody like Surprises in Investigations*
- **Standard Reporting and Presentation Templates** are not utilized
- Consistent **Communication Strategies** are not utilized

# Evaluation

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- **Independent Review Groups** are not formed with:
  - A Specific charter to **monitor** the effectiveness
  - **QA tools** for **feedback and coaching** of investigators
  - An **understanding** of what they are trying to achieve
- **Third Party Reviews** are not performed

# Leadership

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- HSE Policy/Charters are not detailed enough:

*“We investigate all incidents to prevent reoccurrence”*

Versus:

*“All incidents are thoroughly investigated at an appropriate level, root causes are eliminated, and insights gained from such investigations are shared throughout the group in a transparent manner.”*

- Are these achievable?

# Final Thought

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What can you do to  
improve your  
Investigations?

# QUESTIONS?