

# Discussion: Engineering safety

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## Contribution by L. Edwards

The recent paper by Blockley (2011), does not appear to accept there is any real primary value in understanding the impact of human involvement in forensic engineering matters. Surely the investigation of such involvement could be extremely important as part of the determination of lessons to be learnt to assist in reducing the likelihood of similar incidents in the future. It should be an essential consideration in any risk management process. For example, once a person's (or persons') responsibility for an incident is determined, questions could be asked as to why. Was it solely because of a single or combined effect of a poor initial recruitment process leading to the selection of the wrong person for the job, a person's promotion above his or her ability level by others, poor management of that person, poor management by the person of staff lower down the hierarchy, inadequate risk instruction or training? Such practical and hopefully readily understandable matters should be a primary part of any investigation and should

be one of the areas most closely scrutinised by management in any subsequent report.

## Author's reply

The paper does argue for an integration of physical and human/social considerations.

Indeed, the abstract states: 'Technical reports are embedded in human and social systems and so forensic engineers must be sensitive to semantic subtleties regarding error, mistakes, accidents and disasters'. The paper goes on to point out the need to cross disciplinary boundaries between 'hard' physical technical systems and 'soft' managerial ones. The paper also quotes the work of several social scientists in exactly the concerns raised by the contributor.

## REFERENCE

Blockley D (2011) Engineering safety. *Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers, Forensic Engineering* **164**(1): 7–13.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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