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Editorial

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Editorial

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Construction safety and risk management challenges rarely emerge from a single cause. Rather, they develop through the complex interaction of people, organisations, work practices, technologies, and institutional systems. Despite significant advances in engineering, regulations, and management systems, construction remains one of the world's most hazardous industries. While technological innovations and formal control measures have undoubtedly improved safety performance, many of the sector's most enduring challenges cannot be explained through technical factors alone. Increasingly, researchers and practitioners recognise that meaningful improvements in safety require attention to the interactions among people, organisations, work environments, and institutional systems. Understanding these interactions remains one of the most important challenges facing both researchers and industry professionals.

This special issue originates from selected and expanded papers presented at the 2025 CIB World Building Congress hosted by Purdue University. Drawing contributions from CIB Working Commission W099 (Safety, Health, and Well-Being in Construction) and W123 (People in Construction), the issue reflects ongoing efforts to better understand how safety and risk are experienced, managed, and governed across different construction contexts. Although the papers address diverse topics, they collectively highlight the importance of moving beyond narrow technical interpretations of safety and toward a broader understanding of the human, organisational, and institutional factors that shape project outcomes.

Traditionally, construction safety has often been approached through regulations, engineering controls, and management procedures. These remain essential components of effective safety management. Contemporary research, however, increasingly demonstrates that safety outcomes are shaped by organisational culture, workforce characteristics, individual decision making, physical and mental well-being, technical conditions, and broader governance structures. As a result, there is growing interest in human-centred approaches that seek to understand not only how systems are designed, but also how people experience, interpret, and influence those systems in practice.

This broader perspective is reflected throughout the papers included in this special issue. The issue begins with Edirisinghe and Rathnayake's (2026) analysis of gender diversity policies in construction, highlighting the importance of workforce inclusion and institutional accountability in shaping a more sustainable industry. This focus on people is followed by Yu *et al.*'s (2026) exploration

of safety culture across Australia and China, demonstrating how organisational and regulatory contexts influence managerial approaches to safety. Brett's (2026) ethnographic examination of workers' acceptance of risk provides a complementary perspective by reminding us that safety is ultimately enacted through everyday decisions and behaviours on construction sites. Together, these contributions emphasise that safety outcomes are inseparable from the social and cultural realities of construction work.

The latter papers extend this discussion into the practical challenges of managing health, safety, and risk. Okoro *et al.* (2026) present the DiSPA tool, offering a comprehensive approach to assessing musculoskeletal disorder risk factors and reinforcing the importance of worker well-being within safety management. Sarpong *et al.* (2026) explore insurance innovations for contractor risk management in Ghana, broadening the discussion from project-level controls to industry-level resilience and risk transfer mechanisms. Although differing in focus, these studies demonstrate that effective risk management requires attention to both operational realities and broader organisational systems.

An equally important feature of this special issue is the diversity of perspectives represented. Construction management research is often dominated by contributions from a relatively limited number of countries and institutional settings. In contrast, the papers included here draw on experiences and evidence from Australia, China, the UK, and Ghana. This diversity reflects the international and collaborative mission of CIB. While many challenges related to safety and risk management are shared globally, their manifestations and potential solutions remain strongly influenced by local social, cultural, economic, and regulatory conditions. Broadening the geographic scope of construction research is therefore not simply a matter of representation. It also enriches our collective understanding of how construction challenges can be addressed across different environments.

The inclusion of perspectives from both established and emerging research contexts is particularly important. International collaboration creates opportunities to learn not only from highly resourced industries and mature regulatory systems, but also from regions facing different economic, institutional, and workforce conditions. Such diversity strengthens the evidence base available to researchers and practitioners and reinforces the value of global dialogue in addressing shared industry challenges.

Collectively, the papers in this issue demonstrate that safety and risk management are best understood as multidimensional challenges rather than isolated technical problems. Ultimately, the papers presented in this special issue remind us that improving construction safety and managing risk cannot be achieved through technical interventions alone. Effective solutions require attention to people, culture, behaviour, health, governance, and the relationships between them. By bringing together contributions from diverse contexts and perspectives, this special issue contributes to a more holistic understanding of safety and risk management in construction. We hope the discussions presented here encourage further research, collaboration, and practical innovation within the global construction community.

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