



# Human Factors at WorkSafeBC

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## ● Background

WorkSafeBC is a statutory agency responsible for regulating Occupational Health & Safety in the province of B.C. To achieve this mandate and assist workers and employers in creating a culture of health and safety in the workplace, WorkSafeBC educates; consults; inspects and investigates accidents and diseases.

In 2003 WorkSafeBC created the Fatal and Serious Injury Division to reduce serious injuries and mitigate fatalities. To fulfill this objective, WorkSafeBC implemented a systematic approach to accident investigation adopted from the Canadian Transportation Safety Board and in 2004; Human Factors Specialists were integrated to support investigations of fatal and serious injuries.

The systems approach adopted by WorkSafeBC recognizes in any workplace incident, there are numerous interactions between the various workplace elements is a part of a larger 'workplace system'. By evaluating the interaction between people, workplaces, and management systems — the elements that make up the "workplace system" we can probe into why a worker's decision or action made sense to that worker at the time.

By understanding the context we can drive to change industry practices so their system of work is more compatible with human interaction.

Findings from investigations are communicated through WorkSafeBC's Lessons Learned team to industry and other key stakeholders with the goal to advance safety and prevent re-occurrence.

Applying the human factors approach in an industrial context is very interesting – no two investigations are the same. The opportunities that exist are unique and exciting. While it is very rewarding to see that industry is taking an interest in the human factor approach the most rewarding aspect is uncovering the system failures that might – on the surface – at first appear to be operator error.

## ● Beyond Investigations

In addition to fatal and serious file assignments, the Human Factors team carries out independent investigations, conducts research, supports the WorkSafeBC Lessons Learned initiatives, delivers education and training sessions and produces Human Factor bulletins, Hazard Alerts and reports to promote a systems perspective with the objective to advance safety.

## ● Reaching the world

The Human Factor Specialists and WorkSafeBC have also developed an external web page on WorkSafeBC.com, which includes case studies of accident investigations.

## ● A growing community

Due to the growing interest in human factors, this past fall, WorkSafeBC hosted the first Human Factors Community of Practice meeting. 45 guests including representatives from the Transportation Safety Board, BC Hydro, and BC Ferries, as well as several health care professionals and private consultants were in attendance.

We hope to provide an opportunity for human factors practitioners to come together and share their knowledge and expertise so that together, we can help each other solve problems and expand the profession, so everyone is speaking the same language and on the same page as we move forward.

## ● Working to advance safety

While Human Factors work is a new perspective at WorkSafeBC, through research and understanding, Human Factors is helping to transform societal attitudes by changing the mind-set on human error. We are striving to keep the health and safety promise for workers in B.C. by advancing safety in the workplace and ensuring a safe work environment - what WorkSafeBC is all about.