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#### **The Problems Associated with Perfect Goals and Perfect Results - Part 1**

##### **Article by Alan D Quilley CRSP (held from 1985-2021)**

I've been doing a great deal of thinking and writing about the variety of associated problems with using injury data to support the belief that low injury/damage results equate to a corporation being safe. The truth is that very safely operating companies have very low numbers of injuries and other unintended negative results. This is indeed something to celebrate. No-one being injured or becoming ill from their work is a wonderful result. As this two part article will describe, there are a few nagging and logical problems with automatically linking the result of low injury/illness/damage numbers to providing evidence that the work that was done during the period of measurement was done safely.

Don't get me wrong, I'm always happy to help celebrate when a client calls to have me be part of their celebration of low or even zero injuries. In fact, I'm typing this article while I sit on a bus waiting to leave for one of the Northern Alberta oil and gas employer's sites where I'm going to do a presentation during their celebration of working a very long time without anyone experiencing a lost time injury. I will cheer with them happily over their accomplishment.

So before we get too involved in the celebration of low numbers as proof that these people were working safely, let's explore the many problems with using those outcome measures to demonstrate a safe operation. There are two major areas of question and discussion: 1) Are all incidents/injuries/spills and/or other unintended negative outcomes preventable? 2) Does Zero incidents/injuries/spills and/or other unintended negative outcomes mean that during the period of time measured, that the work was done safely? The article will describe many problems with these two "safety standard" mantras.

#### **All Incidents/Injuries/Spills and/or Other Unintended Negative Outcomes Are Preventable**

##### **1) The Problem with Absolutes**

The moment a human utters an absolute, they are immediately wrong. Nothing in our history of human behaviour or experience has been proven to be 100% true or 100% false. If you don't believe me, try to find it yourself. What will happen is you will (for the most part) find exceptions to any

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absolute you can think of (notice how I avoided the absolute). That's not necessarily a bad thing, except if you are stating an absolute. So Zero and 100% are simple not logically available to us as targets or future visions unless of course we are prepared to be disappointed in never reaching our goal/vision.

In Safety Management, the tradition is to measure injuries and negative results as an indication of our success. This is not a reliable measure of the existence of safety. If you reflect on your own experience, there have been many times where you have taken unnecessary risks and not paid the price with unintended results (injury or loss). Even if Zero Harm/Injuries/Accidents is accomplished for a measurable period of time, it doesn't offer proof that the people accomplishing it have done their work safely. It is clearly NOT a good measure of safety as a feature of our work or play. Working and playing in a manner that doesn't put us at unnecessary risk could be seen as working or playing safely. It really is no more complex than that...It will never be 100% but these factors can be managed in a way as to produce highly predictable positive outcomes!

## 2) The Problem that the Reality of Risk Creates on Zero Goals of Any Kind

Anticipate, Evaluate then Control are the three proven steps to hazard management. The key feature is to provide appropriate controls based on what you anticipate could happen that you won't like as an outcome. The multiple factors that go into a careful evaluation of risk are, at best, an educated guess. There is a predictable possibility that sometimes we will be optimistic about our risk management solutions and unaware of an unknown factor that won't become apparent until the negative outcome happens. Other serious deterrents to 100% preventability of all negative outcomes are the limited resources of time and money. Every organization and company has a defined amount of resources. These limits make ALL impossible. ALL would require super human insight into the future and unlimited resources to address every possibility no matter how unlikely. This would actually cause paralysis by analysis. No work would ever get done. We'd be too busy

busy preventing all the possible hazards and spending all our resources and making mistakes impossible. ALL therefore is illogical.

## 3) The Problem of Manipulated Results to Meet the Impossible Goals/Visions

People tend to want to give the boss what they want. Zero results are often accomplished by manipulating the data. Reclassification of Injury types is a classic example of hitting the target by hiding serious injuries as non-serious by accommodation of the injured worker...so they don't show up on the stats!

## 4) Humans are Perfectly and Predictably Imperfect

Humans have proven themselves to be consistently and historically imperfect in their actions and thoughts. To add this imperfection to any formula of variables which will lead you to the conclusion that all incidents/harm/accidents are preventable is illogical and mathematically impossible. So you can say "ALL imperfect outcomes are preventable"...but you'll be wrong. Humans are simply and perfectly... "imperfect".

## 5) Risk and Imperfection is Certain

The simple logic is that if two or more unpredictable factors meet...the results will be unpredictable

When human behaviour meets certain risk (as Dr. Robert Long so correctly states in "Risk Makes Sense") the outcome will be imperfect. How can anyone resolve for this puzzle that all unpredictable negative results are preventable?

## 6) ALL Incidents Can be Prevented...Really?

Hindsight is perfect...our ability to predict the future is not. So I believe that all incidents can only be prevented after they have the insight



gained by investigation. We seldom have this insight prior to the incident. If you have that kind of insight you should leave the safety business and PLAY the STOCK MARKET See you on your own Pacific Ocean Island. We need absolute insight into the future and absolute control of events as they happen to prevent all incidents...we have none of that. The Safety Profession has to be the only profession debating “perfect”, “zero” and “all”. Other professions (medicine, engineering, law, even astrophysics) would never dream of using these kinds of absolutes in any discussion about humans and/or physical things. How we get (Certain Risk) + (Fallible Human) + (Unknown/Uncontrollable/Unanticipated Factors) = (Absolute Preventability) is certainly beyond me.

All of this logic leads directly into our next problem. The ZERO issues. There are many. From leaders in an organization “visioning” such a future and linking it to a “safety” goal, to the natural tendency of humans to try to accomplish the goal set out for them which leads to manipulations and “reclassification” of injury/damage data. More about these issues in Part 2 of this article appearing in next month’s newsletter...until then...strive for safety excellence since safety perfection isn’t really available to you.

*Alan D. Quilley (1954-2021), my late husband, was a proud CRSP and published author of 8 books solely dedicated to OHS. He spent over 4 decades working as a safety professional, and since 2003, was a highly successful and sought after OH&S consultant and trainer/mentor. In determining the direction of our newsletter, I’ve decided to reprint some of Alan’s past articles as they are virtually timeless.*

### **Online CRST Examination Preparation**

Safety Results Ltd, in conjunction with Lambton College based in Sarnia, Ontario, brings you THE best online CRST Examination Preparation Workshop!

The next course starts July 4/23 and concludes July 31/23. Registrations for this course will be accepted by Lambton College until 4:00PM EDT, July 5/23.

The aim of this course is to assist in performing your own knowledge gap analysis and then create a study plan which will enable you to focus on the competencies that you need to master before the exam.

To review and register in this online course, please click [here](#). (Registrations are handled exclusively by Lambton College)

Exclusive to Lambton College students confirmed in this course, the study material that the course was built upon is available at a special student discounted rate of \$269.00 CAD plus applicable taxes. Shipping (within Canada only) is included. More details [here](#).

### **Next BCRSP-CPD Mandatory Ethics Next course June 1/23**

This course takes approximately 3.5 hours to complete. Registrations for the June 1/23 course are open until June 5/23, and the course will conclude June 30/23.

This comprehensive and thought-provoking course, designed specifically for, and approved by the BCRSP by Alan Quilley, (who was a CRSP for 35+ years), is ensured to enlighten and challenge a CRSP’s thinking of ethics in their professional practice. Our course is facilitated by Greg McInnes CRSP who served as a Board Member of the BCRSP for a # of years.

As required by the BCRSP, the course also includes detailed discussion of:

- BCRSP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct
- Rules of Procedure of the Discipline Committee of the Board of Canadian Registered Safety Professionals

To register for the course, please click [here](#).

### **CRSP & CRST Exam Prep Study Material**

Don’t forget! For those that prefer self-study, we also offer CRSP & CRST Exam Prep Study Material. For details, please visit our website:

[CRSP Study Material](#) or [CRST Study Material](#)

## CRSP AND CRST VIRTUAL COACHING EXAMINATION PREPARATION

As it has always been our commitment to help candidates with their studies for both the [CRSPEX](#) and the [CRSTEX](#), we are continuing our *Virtual Coaching Packages*. These packages are currently available to those that are writing the 2019 Blueprint CRSTEX and the 2020 Blueprint CRSPEX.

We will provide all of the material (shipped at our cost within Canada only). We are also delighted to offer generous discounts to current members in good standing of the CSSE and WOHSS (not combinable). For more information on those discounts, please contact [Marie](#).

This virtual package includes 6 hours of personal coaching with Greg McInnes CRSP. The hours are broken down however you wish. There will be homework assignments between the calls. Calls are individualized and held via phone or Zoom Video Conference, your choice. Packages must be used within 6 months of purchase.

*“It’s really important to know who is trying to teach you something”. - Alan D Quilley CRSP*

### Who is your Coach?

Greg McInnes, CRSP is our instructor and can teach you how to study to help you in being successful in your journey to certification. He is a respected leader in OH&S, having over 30 years’ experience in the field in OH&S management positions (civic government, healthcare, aerospace, oil and gas and utilities). Greg has also been a member of the Board of Governors for BCRSP and held positions with CSSE at both the local, provincial and national levels.

He is a working CRSP who consults to industry helping them create and implement their Health and Safety program. Greg has developed and instructed adult OHS education programs at the University of Alberta and has co-instructed at NAIT along with instructing OHS courses for varying companies. With all his experience, and sharing our techniques to help you focus your studies, why look elsewhere? When selecting your mentor, take the time to research who other providers are. We believe that they simply won’t measure up with us in terms of quality, experience and teaching style.

*“There are no hard questions if you know the answers”. - Alan D Quilley CRSP*

### CRSP Virtual Coaching Package

Inclusions:

- Study material (material shipped at our cost within Canada only) based on the 2020 CRSP Examination Blueprint
- 6 hours personal coaching with Greg McInnes
- CRSP Exam Prep Study Manual
- CRSP Exam Prep Knowledge Gap Analysis Questions & Answers Workbook
- Handbook (offered only to those taking part in this Virtual Coaching Package)
- \$899.00 + tax

### CRST Virtual Coaching Package

Inclusions:

- Study material (material shipped at our cost within Canada only) based on the 2019 CRST Examination Blueprint
- 6 hours personal coaching with Greg McInnes
- CRST Exam Prep Manual
- CRST Exam Prep Practice Questions and Answers Examination Workbook
- Handbook (offered only to those taking part in this Virtual Coaching Package)
- \$899.00 + tax

For more information, please visit our website:

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If you wish to purchase only the study material (CRSP Study Manual and Workbook or CRST Study Manual and Workbook) please visit our website:

[CRSP Study Material](#) or [CRST Study Material](#)