



### An Open Letter to Those Benighted Souls Who Cannot Accept The Obvious

Dear Believer,

You tell me that all incidents are preventable. Read my lips: NO!

Actually you can't read my lips because they look like I have been overzealous with the Botox. As painful as this is, I am pleased to add the following experiences to my long list of case studies disproving your absurd conviction. Of course, I'm sure you will be able to rationalize your way out of this uncomfortable mental conflict; confirmation bias is very strong.

Here's the first story: riding my mountain bike on a recent

morning, a wasp got itself caught up in my covid beard, or my covid mustache to be precise. As I attempted the complex maneuver of removing it while not falling off, it took the opportunity to sting me right on the upper lip. Ouch. Certainly an Unplanned Event.



Not the guilty party

I am not allergic to stings, so no major damage, other than being temporarily unable to talk. I acknowledge that to some people this is a blessing. To them I said, take full advantage while you can, the swelling won't last long. Some people react terribly to stings and for them this could have been much more serious in terms of injury consequence.

In the second bicycle related Unplanned Event, my saddle fell off while I was riding. One minute I had a seat, the next I had a pipe sticking up where the seat used to be. Again no per-

manent damage, other than possibly never being able to dance again. Close examination revealed that the bolt holding the saddle on had sheared. In an industrial setting, subjecting the bolt to metallurgical failure analysis could have determined why it sheared, but that would cost more than a whole new bike! Even without such an analysis, it is possible to narrow the failure cause to either a latent manufacturing defect or an untimely fatigue issue.

Please don't get all exercised about whether these would have been recordable / reportable had they happened at work. To do

so misses the point that there are a whole range of adverse outcomes possible even from such simple unplanned events. For example, say the first one happened right before I was supposed to go on stage at some major conference event and I was unable to speak. A different form of damage, but damage nonetheless.

Acts of nature, semi-predictable failures and undetected latent errors are among the six types of unplanned event that you should recognize may be unpreventable:

1. Acts of Nature
2. Acts of Third Parties
3. Human Error (Some)
4. Extremely Complex Events
5. Semi-Predictable Failures
6. Undetected Latent Errors

And that's before we even get started on unplanned events that aren't worth preventing and those the organization accepts as OK

through the process of risk assessment, ALARP, SFARP, RAM, etc.

In case you're wondering, I'm feeling better already!

Best regards,  
Your Friendly Local Risk  
Guy



The bolt in question



## Risk-Based Social Distancing

For those unwilling or unable to engage in full-on social distancing, vPSI suggests a risk-based policy for managing the risks associated with Covid-19.

There are 4 probabilities that can be taken into account to make a reasonable (but imperfect) risk assessment:

P1: the likelihood of coming into contact with someone who has Covid-19 in a transmissible form.

P2: the likelihood that one catches Covid-19 from that person.

P3: the likelihood that one then develops the symptoms of the illness itself.

P4: the broad spectrum of possible outcomes in that event.

At the time of writing, the number of cases of Covid-19 is small relative to the population as a whole so P1 is already low, whether you behave any differently than normal or not. Handling P1 by minimizing physical contact and close proximity with other persons is a good approach, especially given that the incubation period may be a couple of weeks and that asymptomatic transmission is apparently playing a more important role in spreading this virus than originally thought.

P2 is a bit of an unknown, but minimizing physical contact during in-person interactions, mask wearing and practicing good hygiene

should go at least a little way towards reducing it. Have a look at YouTube for videos that describe effective hand washing. You may be surprised.

P3 is interesting. Numbers are not completely clear, but it looks like half or more of the people who get Covid-19 exhibit no symptoms, meaning their performance should not be impaired as they go about their daily lives. They may of course be pre-symptomatic or a vector for asymptomatic transmission.

Numbers are somewhat clearer around P4. For most people who catch it, Covid-19 will not be serious. The numbers available certainly indicate that increasing age has a significant upward effect on the likelihood of death after contracting Covid-19. Interestingly, there are no (or an insignificant

number of) deaths recorded in the <9 years old age group.

Pre-existing conditions also affect P4. The number of deaths / number of Covid-19 cases increase for those with cardiovascular issues, diabetes, respiratory disease, hypertension, and cancer.

How do these probabilities inform a risk-based approach to social distancing? Knowing how the probabilities interact enables more nu-



anced risk management of Covid-19, both with respect to the individual and to others that they may interact with. Older folks, especially those with pre-existing conditions, are at highest risk and they should be practicing social distancing way more vigorously than other demographics.

Those who are not in the high risk groups must bear in mind that they may have Covid-19 and yet be asymptomatic. Even if no indications of Covid-19 infection are presenting in an individual, they may still be a risk to others, so should avoid close interactions with those in the higher risk categories. If such interactions are unavoidable, then social distancing from the rest of the world should be practiced to the extent possible to minimize the likelihood of picking up and transmitting the virus.

In conclusion, there is a significant population unwilling or unable to engage in full-on social distancing. Understanding the risk components associated with Covid-19 will enable such people to minimize both their own exposure and the threat that they may present to others.



## vPSI Around Town and at the Podium

As everyone knows, in-person meetings and training classes are off the table for the foreseeable future. Never fear though, your intrepid vPSI consultants are still available for your problem solving needs and in fact we are still holding training classes, albeit web-based intro classes rather than our usual immersive full-day classes.

In addition, Norman Ritchie will be a panel member for the upcoming SPE (Society of Petroleum Engineers) LACPEC and HSE & Sustainability Virtual Conference, July 27-31. LACPEC, the Latin American and Caribbean Petroleum Engineering Conference, has been held for more than 25 years. It is being held jointly with the SPE HSE conference for the first time. Discounted registrations are available for

students and one-day registrations can be purchased by those unable to attend all four days. Norman's panel will be discussing "Leadership through Risk Understanding" on the last day of the conference.

Energy Safety Canada (ESC) commissioned our new vPSI Canada Ltd office to present a series of web-based seminars in June. The first webinar was on the topic of "Risk Tolerance and Human Performance" and the second covered "Investigating Unplanned Events in a Fraction of the Time Currently Spent (Including Near Misses)". Both sessions were recorded and are free to view or download via the ESC website. With more than 2 hours of content, these videos could be used as either an intro-



Not your vPSI consultants

duction to the vPSI System™ or as a refresher for those who have previously attended one of our workshops. Of course, these videos can't actually replace real vPSI training! The third episode in the series, to be broadcast on September 15th, is the culmination of the series and will focus on Key Performance Indicators and Human & Organization Performance. It is also free and registration is available on the ESC website.

## Nostalgia Around Combining Business with Pleasure

There are few opportunities for travel at the moment, so we're opening up the archive to take a wistful look at past adventures...

In November of 2019, while in the Middle East region to provide vPSI training to Vantage Drilling International in Dubai, vPSI consultants took the opportunity to visit Muscat, Oman to meet with long-standing client Occidental.



Oxy has been operating in Oman for more than 30 years and is now the country's largest independent oil producer.

The vPSI visit happened to coincide with the Oman National Day celebration on November 18th, which commemorated three events: Oman's 369th anniversary

of independence from Portugal, the 49th anniversary of the late Qaboos bin Said al Said's rise to the Sultanate, and the Sultan's 79th birthday. vPSI consultants participated in the celebrations, and of course our Scottish co-founder Norman Ritchie enjoyed the bagpipe music. Oman and some other parts of the region have a very old bagpipe tradition, possibly predating that of Scotland, and the instrument retains an enthusiastic following today, no doubt helped by the late Sultan's period of service in a Scottish army regiment.



Our consultants were impressed with the distinctive architecture of Muscat, including the fabulous Royal Opera House, pictured. Opened in 2011, the Opera House was designed to reflect a contemporary version of traditional Omani architecture.





## Announcing vPSI Canada Ltd ... with a Spotlight on Rick Theriau

The last several years have seen significant growth in vPSI projects for Canadian clients, so we're excited to announce that vPSI Canada Ltd is now officially open for business in our new Calgary, Alberta office.

vPSI Canada Ltd will assist medium and large size employers improve and optimize health and safety results through human performance risk management and by enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the investigation of all types of incidents.



National Flag of Canada

vPSI's Canadian operations will be led by Richard (Rick) Theriau who brings with him more than 25

years of safety, quality, and environmental management experience.

Rick has worked in oil and gas from the age of 15 and recently retired from Halliburton Group Canada after 32 years of leadership

and engagement with each of the Canadian product service lines. He specialized in service quality improvement and efficiency while leading continuous improvement efforts on health, safety and environmental initiatives.

He believes in giving back to the energy industry and has been as-



sisting Energy Safety Canada, Enform and PITS since 2002 as a thought leader on many successful industry initiatives. These have included leading the teams that compiled IRP #7, IRP #8, Chemical classification, Contractor Management and currently is involved with the Fit for Duty initiative.

His professional education has included becoming a Petroleum Engineering Technologist, a Registered Environmental Manager, and a Canadian Registered Safety Professional.

## Introducing the vPST

Although it has been some time since we last issued a newsletter, vPSI has kept busy through the intervening years, especially during the current time that won't be named (as the media and organizational marketing departments have beaten certain phrases into the ground).

One of the more significant recent developments is the result of a partnership with Veris Global to create a digital platform for the vPSI Investigative Process.

Dubbed the vPST (vPSI Problem Solving Tool) this web-based application guides users through every step of an incident investigation, with resources along the way to help ensure quality data, efficient analysis, and the creation of effective Corrective Actions that truly, in the real world, address what went wrong, why it went wrong, and that implement measures to prevent it from going wrong again in the future.



The tool integrates with user company's existing email system to allow for quick and easy task assignment and follow up.

The vPST is accessible from any web browser on any platform. This allows clients to use the tool from anywhere in the world using handheld devices, laptops, tablets, or PCs.

It is fully customizable within the framework of the vPSI System™, meaning everything can change except those fields and steps necessary for the vPSI Investigative Process.

To ensure sustainability, the vPST automatically calculates vPSI Metric KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) to measure organizational learning and prove continuous improvement.