

# Naval Safety Command

## Risk Awareness: Human Factors & Risk Mindset



Human error is a natural part of any operation – especially in high-stress, high-tempo environments. But understanding why people make mistakes helps us build systems and cultures that reduce those risks. This week's focus helps teams stay alert to the human element behind many mishaps.

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Human error is rarely just about one bad choice. It's usually a symptom of bigger conditions. You can help prevent mishaps by staying present, encouraging open dialogue, and helping your team stay aware of themselves and each other.

### Why Human Factors Matter

- Even the best procedures can break down when people are tired, rushed, or distracted.
- Factors like fatigue, stress, overconfidence, distractions and poor communication are consistently found at the root of mishaps.
- These aren't just individual issues- they're part of an operational environment we help shape

Team Talk Prompt: What are some common signs that someone on the team might be operating under stress or fatigue?

#### Spot the Early Signs

- Look out for signs of burnout, distraction, or people "going through the motions."
- Encourage short check-ins during long evolutions. A quick question - "Are you good to go?" - can open up a space for honest feedback.
- Normalize conversations about workload, fatigue, or stress before they show up in performance.



Personnel assigned to Naval Support Activity (NSA) Souda Bay, Crete, Greece, simulate a casualty evacuation during a Commander, Navy Installations Command Final Evaluation Problem (FEP) evaluation.

### What is a Risk Mindset?

A risk-aware mindset means being tuned in to what could go wrong - without becoming afraid or frozen.

- It's about staying alert, asking questions and encouraging others to do the same.
- Risk mindset helps us recognize warning signs before they turn into mishaps.

Team Talk Prompt: Do we stop and talk about near-misses? What's one we have had lately and what did we learn from it?

### The Role of Communication

Human factors often come down to communication breakdowns such as assumptions, missed hand-offs, or unclear expectations.

- Speaking up and clarifying before something goes wrong is a sign of strength, not weakness.
- Managers can model this by encouraging questions and acknowledging when things feel "off."

Team Talk Prompt: When was the last time someone spoke up and prevented a mistake?

**Helpful Tip:** The DoD Human Factors (HFACS) Analysis Classification Guide lists 37 supervisory and organizational influences that can contribute to mishaps. It's a great reference to help identify hidden latent factors before they appear in a mishap. The HFACS is also built into the Risk Management Information (RMI) system for reporting mishaps.



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