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Underscoring the Need for Training, Certification

Many of us continue to see evidence of the dire need for training and certification of system safety engineers.

Expertise and knowledge varies widely. There is inconsistent understanding and use of terms and techniques (e.g., hazard, failure mode, safety-critical, safety-related, vital, software safety, common cause, common mode, FMEA). In addition, the number of years of experience can be misleading.

We recently came across an example where one organization clearly did not have an appreciation for what they were specifying. They were calling up far too many safety-related standards and guidelines. Not only that but some conflicted with others. Compliance would clearly be challenging from the get-go and often would not be possible.

We have seen many situations requiring mapping levels to each other (e.g., SILs to DALs, and DALS to AELs) which is problematic.

Asking for software FMECA is cause for grief. Asking for only software FMEA may indicate lack of insight into what the technique is able to reveal, what it cannot reveal and; therefore, its usefulness.

The day when the prime wins a contract bid, can be cause for celebration but, for the safety engineer, it can be cause for Tylenol or something stronger.

Issues with Standards & Guidelines

Beyond contractual headaches, others lay waiting with safety standards and guidelines themselves. Having been "around for a while", our eyes quickly focus on what is wrong with these and it seems as though there is always something wrong, sometimes to a high degree even with the latest revisions of well established standards. There is also a lack of common terminology/vocabulary between standards and guidelines.

It is inherently difficult to attract the "best in the field" to donate time and money to standards and guideline development. If this could be done, we would start to see a clear improvement in the quality of these items, as long as their contributions are not vetoed by the majority of others less qualified.

Lagging Behind

We are sure that many of us share the same thought that, after so many years, often dedicating our lives to this profession, that the system safety profession would be further ahead than it is today.

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Ultimate Repository?

Often, despite expending a great deal of effort and generating many system safety and software safety documents and analyses, we are skeptical regarding their ultimate destination. A filing cabinet? On a shelf?

Last Courses for 2014 Announced

Hands-On Fault Tree Analysis
Sept. 9-10
        Includes 20 FTA Accept/
        Reject Criteria

Software Safety
Sept. 22-25

System Safety
Oct. 27-31

Aviation System Safety
Nov. 18-20

www.hcrq.com/
scheduled_courses.html

ATCA 59th Annual Conference & Civil/Military Aviation Conference (CMAC)

September 28-October 1
www.atca.org/59Annual

Visit our exhibit booth.

How To Get Promoted

This new webinar has been very successful and has received many compliments.

www.hcrq.com/WebinarHTGP.html

You Might Be A System Safety Engineer If

You prepare an emergency response plan for your July 4th picnic.

Your heart beats faster when someone mentions "ameliorators."

You spend time contemplating whether a Preliminary Hazard Analysis is a "top down" or "bottom up" analysis method.

You see jaywalking against a "Do Not Walk" signal as proof that warning devices are not effective hazard controls.

The only way your significant other can get your attention is to throw the word "mitigation" into the conversation.

You have books on accidents and disasters prominently displayed in your home.

You are proud that you know the meaning of all the fault tree symbols, even the obscure ones.

More to come ….