

Resources

# Safety matters

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THINK



Government of Western Australia  
Department of Mines and Petroleum  
Resources Safety

## CHAMPIONING SAFETY

RENEWAL ALERT FOR  
DANGEROUS GOODS  
SECURITY CARD HOLDERS

PROSPECTOR SAFETY

**A**t the APPEA Conference held in Perth on 8 April 2014, many attending were fascinated by a paper presented by Sir Charles Haddon-Cave, the chair of a British inquiry that looked into the causes of an RAF aircraft fire and crash that killed 14 personnel in Afghanistan in 2006. This was the worst loss of life in a military accident since the Falklands War in 1982. Sir Charles explained how it was caused by serious technical failures and pointed to key learnings for all industries.

I want to share the findings he presented as they are relevant and topical to the Western Australian mining sector, and reinforce a number of issues that have been canvassed in recent times — leadership, culture and the setting of priorities around our management of occupational health and safety in our workplaces.

Sir Charles quoted Ernst Friedrich "Fritz" Schumacher, an internationally influential economic thinker, statistician and economist in Britain, who served as the Chief Economic Advisor to the UK National Coal Board for two decades. Fritz said "Any intelligent fool can make things bigger, more complex, and more violent. It takes a touch of genius — and a lot of courage — to move in the opposite direction."

The point being made was that, over time, we have made systems far too complicated for individuals to understand and implement. We should strive to make our safety management systems simpler so they are easily understood, and therefore used by those they are designed to protect.

The paper principally addressed issues related to the safety case methodology, at the heart of which is the safety management system, which is why the learnings and ideas put forward do apply to the mining industry.

Sir Charles described the key findings from the inquiry as follows:

*It is vital to identify and promulgate the right principles and stick to them.*

*Franklin D. Roosevelt said, "Rules are not necessarily sacred, principles are."*

*In The Nimrod Review, I highlighted four principles which I regarded as of paradigm importance: leadership, independence, people (not just process and paper) and simplicity."*

**Principle of Leadership:** *There must be strong leadership from the very top, demanding and demonstrating by example active and constant commitment to safety and risk management as overriding priorities.*

**Principle of Independence:** *There must be thorough independence throughout the regulatory regime, in particular in the setting of safety and risk policy, regulation, auditing and enforcement.*

**Principle of People:** *There must be a much greater focus on people in the delivery of high standards of safety and fitness for purpose (and not just on process and paper).*

**Principle of Simplicity:** *Regulatory structures, processes and rules must be as simple and straightforward as possible so that everyone can understand them.*

Sir Charles also stated that it is vital to foster the right safety culture and maintain it — every day, every week, and every month. A strong and effective safety culture is vital to reducing accidents.

This was summarised by taking James Reason's four-point approach and adding a fifth one:

- A *reporting culture*: an organisational climate where people readily report problems, errors and near misses.
- A *just culture*: strikes a sensible balance between a "blame culture" and a "blame-free culture"; that is, between holding people properly accountable for their acts or omissions and ensuring the right lessons are learned for the future.
- A *flexible culture*: a culture that can adapt to changing circumstances and demands while maintaining its focus on safety.
- A *learning culture*: the willingness and competence to draw the right conclusions from its safety information and the will to implement major safety reforms.
- A *questioning culture*: it is vital to ask "What if?" and "Why?" questions.

The fifth element proposed by Sir Charles Haddon-Cave is, I believe, the key to developing a strong safety culture.



**Simon Ridge**

*Executive Director, Resources Safety*

30 May 2014



Left to right: Christina Folley and members of RNO's Health and Safety Team, Katie Barr, Jenni Pratt, Jody Webber and Scott Robertson  
Photo courtesy First Quantum Minerals Ltd

"I BELIEVE EVERY PERSON HAS THE RIGHT TO GO TO WORK AND NOT GET HURT, AND I'M COMMITTED TO FINDING PRACTICAL AND SENSIBLE WAYS TO MAKE THIS A REALITY"

## CHAMPIONING SAFETY

*During site visits, mines inspectors are always pleased to meet the many dedicated people working across the State to make a difference to safety in their workplace. Resources Safety Matters cannot feature all these safety champions but we would like to share some of their experiences and find out what motivates them. Here is one person's story, as told to Resources Safety Matters' Heather McNeill.*

*Christina Folley is the Health and Safety Manager for FQM Australia's Ravensthorpe Nickel Operation (RNO). She describes RNO's safety and management teams as relentless and determined to drive change to facilitate a strong safety culture on-site through empowering employees and delivering exciting safety programs.*

**Heather: How did you get into workplace health and safety?**

**Christina:** I started my career as a Medic/Security Officer where, driven by a desire to learn, I asked to participate in incident investigations. This exposed me to experienced safety professionals and inspired me to move into health and safety in 2005.

Since then, I have worked in a variety of safety-related roles at the Kalgoorlie Super Pit, Norilsk Nickel at Cawse and Goldfields Crane Hire.

I took up my position at Ravensthorpe Nickel Operations in Hopetoun in 2010.

I believe every person has the right to go to work and not get hurt, and I'm committed to finding practical and sensible ways to make this a reality.

**Heather: What activities take place at RNO?**

**Christina:** Operations at RNO include open pit mining, beneficiation of nickel laterite ore, pressure acid leaching, atmospheric leaching, counter-current decantation, and precipitation and filtration to produce a mixed hydroxide precipitate product.

**Heather: What is RNO's safety mantra?**

**Christina:** Our approach, while considered unconventional by some, is to empower our people to think for themselves.

**Heather: How many health and safety representatives does RNO have?**

**Christina:** We have 427 employees at RNO. Of these, 27 workers have been elected as health and safety representatives and they form our Health and Safety Committee. The committee has a definite sense of camaraderie, which helps the representatives to collaborate to resolve concerns raised by their crews. To support the group, our General Manager will often attend committee meetings.

I meet with the representatives once a week for an informal session where we discuss current issues and develop strategies for how they can best be managed.

**Heather: What safety challenges do you and your team face in your roles?**

**Christina:** RNO has transitioned through various stages of construction and commissioning then into full operations. As such, we have had to modify our approach numerous times to fit the business needs at the time. While it can be tiring to continually modify our approach, the payoff is seeing our operations move a step higher in the safety culture maturity model.

As with most organisations, it is rare that change is enthusiastically embraced, but the health and safety and management teams are united and relentlessly determined to drive change. We find various challenges such as outright resistance to change to a lack of understanding arising from fear or apprehension. This continues to challenge us but we dedicate time to listening to people's concerns and then finding real solutions.



Left to right: Safety and health representatives John Dolan, Allan Waide, Brenton Smith, JJ De Beer, Carmen Potito, Kelly Button, Don Holm and Renier Koekemoer with FQM Ravensthorpe's General Manager Morrie Rowe (centre)

"THE UNDERPINNING MESSAGE IS THAT WE MAKE BETTER DECISIONS WHEN WE USE ALL THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO US"

Left to right: RNO's Emergency Services Officers Allan Sharpe, James Duffus, Brad Stewart and Rob Paddock



**Heather:** How have safety initiatives improved safety standards at your mine?

**Christina:** We invested time in running trials of various products, initiatives and tools to find something that would fit with our approach to practical and sensible safety.

Crew Resources Management (CRM) was introduced into our safety processes in 2011. CRM is an external program that uses lessons learnt from the aviation industry to reduce incidents caused by human error. The underpinning message is that we make better decisions when we use all the resources available to us.

It's an exciting and fast-paced program where we weave aviation and mining together to achieve group participation, and open and honest dialogue.

**Heather:** What results have come from your CRM program?

**Christina:** CRM provided the platform for dialogue between all levels of operation, which resulted in some quick wins with issues being raised and resolved. However, longer term, our safety culture development needs a strategic approach driven by our entire workforce. Over the coming years, we will work towards this goal and endeavour to provide a safe workplace where there is a clear understanding of the beliefs and duties required to create a fair and just culture.

Annual survey results indicate the overall attitude towards health and safety management has improved in recent years, with a large proportion of employees stating CRM and subsequent follow-up actions are the cause.

**Heather:** What is your advice to other safety managers?

**Christina:** Surround yourself with talented people. Finding a technically proficient safety professional can be straightforward, but finding a person who can handle criticism and really sell a safety idea with passion can be more difficult.