

Departing from procedure does not necessarily increase the risk of an accident

The belief that departing from procedure leads to accidents is widespread in all sectors of industrial activity. This belief is based on the idea that procedures are exhaustive and all that need to be done is to follow them to carry out a task.

However, this comprehensiveness is not a given. Work is often made up of complex tasks that are carried out in a changing environment under time constraints. In these conditions, the number of parameters at play in the workplace and the combinations makes it impossible to identify all aspects of an activity in a useful document.

The reality of work is that procedures are almost always adapted *in situ* by operators. These are the people who find inconsistencies, lack of detail and problems in application. These invisible and silent adjustments make it possible for all at-risk socio-technical systems to function.

Consequently, these daily adjustments, that we call 'departures' make it possible to carry out the expected work. In practice, very few of them lead to safety breaches.

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May 2014

References

[Human and organizational factors of safety : state of the art](#). François Daniellou, Marcel Simard, Ivan Boissières, March 2010