

High Reliability Organizations

HRO and a Culture of Mindfulness



History of HRO

- 1984 a research group from U of C at Berkley
- Interested in why certain high risk operations functioned with less than there fair share of accidents
- HRO comes from observing operations at air traffic control centre's, nuclear power facilities and aircraft carriers



HRO Principles

1. Pre occupied with failure
2. Reluctance to Simplify
3. Sensitive to operations
4. Commitment to Resilience
5. Deference to Expertise



What is HRO?

- Humility is the foundation- there are no perfect people-there are no perfect systems
- Focus is on operations-think uncomfortable thoughts and ask uncomfortable questions
- Embrace respectful challenge
- Clear sharing of information up and down the chain of command-people need to feel safe reporting bad things
- Everyone is important-there are no rock stars, no secrets, high level of trust from the top to the bottom



What is HRO?

- HRO's are learning organizations
- They embrace failure and are aware of the paradox of success
- They know what can go wrong and look for weak signals that it is happening
- They know simplification creates blind spots (class day doc)
- HRO is simply thinking, acting and communicating these principles daily



Being Mindful

- People who act mindfully notice and pursue that neglected information the mindless leave unnoticed and untouched
- They have the ability to see things coming long before they arrive (hindsight always shows the big one was hidden in plain view)
- Mindfulness is grounded in an understanding that knowledge and ignorance grow together
- It needs constant maintenance; mindful processes unravel rather quickly



Mindfulness

- Mindful people pay attention differently
- They look for things that prove their understanding of a situation is wrong or biased
- They seek out different perspectives and opinions
- Mindful cultures are flexible and use knowledge where ever they can find it



How to be mindful

- Restate goals and objectives in the form of mistakes we must not allow to happen
- I.e: “we absolutely cannot allow anyone to be injured or killed”
- I.e: “we absolutely cannot allow property to be damaged if we can possibly prevent it”
- I.e: “we absolutely cannot allow resources to be threatened if we can possibly prevent it



Being mindful

- Thoughts are articulated “out loud”
- Use 201 communication structure and think out loud!
- Encourage inquiry and different views.
- Ie: “ What is your take on this Mrs. Smith”
- Raise the comfort level so people can talk about what they think and believe
- Value “Everyone’s insights” ie: fire chief, industry, locals, etc.



Be Mindful of the Unexpected

- Mindful culture is always pre occupied with the unexpected
- The unexpected in fire suppression is the **wind**
- **“Pay attention” to the wind**
- Play “what if” with the wind
- Ie: what if the wind changes direction...who is at risk...where is their safety zone?



Other things to be mindful of

- FWI values...present fire danger level
- Equipment preparedness...is our gear ready to go?
- Every “little” thing that doesn’t seem right or is being neglected by others. Speak up!
- Mindful culture reacts with a big response to little problems ie: fix it now!



Being mindful

- Watch out when expectations are high as mindfulness is low
- I.e.: everything was going perfect then “unexpectedly” the wind picked up and the fire took off
- Mindful people expect errors to be made. They pick up on them quickly and fix them before they can become a major problem (“big response to little problems”)



Mindfulness and Learning

- Mindful cultures are learning cultures
- After Action Reviews (AAR's)
- Always be thinking “what would we do different next time”
- Share this learning with everyone



Mindfulness Applied

- Mindful organizations pay attention to where the work gets done
- Remember the people in the field who are responding to the fire.....what are their needs from you....what can change that can cause them problems...play “what if” for them
- Be sensitive to the here and now...ie: make sure fire operations has the needed support...aircraft, equipment and staff



What Now?

- Restate objectives in form of mistakes that we absolutely cannot allow to happen
- Create awareness of vulnerability. “What is risky here? Play “what if”
- Cultivate humility...develop a healthy skepticism about our success and a greater awareness of the potential for failure
- Create an atmosphere of openness...make it easy for people to ask for help



How to be Mindful

- Communicate! Make sure every voice is heard. Articulate your thoughts out loud. **Remember disagreement is not disrespect!**
- Make sense of things by thinking out loud Ie: I think we should do... because.....now talk to me..
- Create flexible decision structures so sense making migrates to those with the most experience to make the decision
- Ie; let the most experienced tanker driver decide if the road is too soft or hill too steep.



What Can You do?

- Question the status quo
- Expect the unexpected
le: monitor and communicate what the wind is doing.
Articulate thoughts out loud
- Ask yourself, “How can this go bad?”
- If you look at your operation and everything is going perfect.....**YOU ARE OVERLOOKING SOMETHING!!**



What Can You do?

- Lead! People will see that mindfulness is practical, doable and makes a difference
- Restate goals and objectives as mistakes we absolutely cannot allow to happen
- Ie: “we absolutely cannot allow the right winger to get in front of the net on the power play”
- Continuously reinforce three values, credibility, trust and attentiveness
- AAR every event and share learning with others

