

Human Reliability

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Our Society has numerous experts in virtually all areas of reliability. But there is one area that affects us and virtually all are involved in, but perhaps because of its everyday and everywhere occurrence it is not in our daily thought. It is like air, we all need it, and we all breathe it, but we seldom think about it. Social and behavioral scientists and psychologists probably studied the reasons why we apparently pay more attention to the infrequent events and less to the frequent events. It is as if the attention we pay to an occurrence is inversely proportional to its occurrence frequency. So because we always breathe, we seldom think about it. The same is apparently true with Human Reliability.

Humans are involved in countless activities; some as employees, some as students, some as volunteers, and some as friends. Regardless what we do, others depend on our reliable performance. This is where Human Reliability comes in. Just as we expect our machines and equipment to be reliable, we expect the people around us to be equally reliable. We rely on our friends in time of need. We also rely on family members and colleagues. We even have general expectations of people at large. This is why we prefer to live in groups, in a community and not in isolation where there is no one to rely on.

As I stated above, the same applies to volunteers. Our Reliability Society members elected our Administrative Committee (AdCom) with the expectation that we will perform our duties in a reliable way. The same applies to people we elect to other IEEE offices, or to other organizations that we may belong to. When a company hires an employee it is assumed that the individual will be reliable. Parents and students expect reliable teachers. This concept applies to virtually all human activity, and as members of the IEEE Reliability Society we should keep that in mind.

Recently I thought about why people volunteer for any activity. I concluded that there are two and only two reasons:

1. Some volunteer because of who they want to be, and
2. Some volunteer because of what they want to do.

But regardless of their reason, we expect them to be reliable.

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