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"Unforeseen Catastrophic Incidents" (UCI)

"BreakingNEWS!"Everything is a, "game of numbers" and/or "Unforeseen Catastrophic Incidents" (UCI). What are they?!

"Life comes at you fast" - a tag line of Nationwide commercials, is sad, but true, for sure. Mostly, it refers to some unforeseen tragic incident. Sometimes a, Unforeseen Catastrophic Incident.

In our profession, as Health and Safety professionals, mostly we strive to prevent sickness and accidents in the workplace. But, supposedly it is like everything, it's a "game of numbers". Sickness and accidents numbers are always there. It is, of course, our job to "work" those numbers down. Better training, knowledge, products, regs, preparation, etc. and the 'drivers' all, play an important role.

But, what about....."BreakingNEWS!"those (most times, overdone) dreaded, screaming announcements which perk our attention? Many times they are serious local, National or global incidents which require our attention. But, what about those, "Unforeseen Catastrophic Incidents" (UCI)?! These incidents such as.....9/11.....SARS....Minn/St.Paul bridge collapse....the recent cranes and derricks mishaps, etc. what about them? Pretty difficult incidents to prevent or predict or pinpoint, but also can effect now, as so called drivers. Additional drivers now, as they can and do change most everything on Safety, Health & Environmental issues. They dominate and in full focus for a period of time, each depending the severity and duration. They (UCI) aren't necessarily affected by the,"game of numbers", because they are unforeseen. But a number still, as they do and will occur.

These incidents are not necessarily limited to the referred to, "nontraditional work environments", so well defined in the January issue of "Professional Safety", "Outside the Norm", By Wendy D. Ash, CSP. These, I believe, somewhat differ, although in the same 'family', of large scale disaster emergencies.

Earthquakes, tornados, hurricanes or floods present, "nontraditional work environments", certainly. And, in many cases, are somewhat predictable and/or advanced in warning, but uncontrolled, but also are traditional in that we have been exposed to them before and can train for them. But, not so as much with UCI's....9/11....SARS.....Minn/St. Paul....the cranes, etc. These, UCI's, in most instances have not necessarily occurred or even been thought of before, are unpredictable, uncontrolled and Unforeseen Catastrophic Incidents.

It might be countered that the bridge collapse and the cranes/derricks incidents may be the result of not following inspection procedures, operator error or not following proper safety practices. Could be....jury's still out here. But, new weight tests, and critical components criteria affecting performance characteristics determinations are being considered and possible new regs will result.

Back to the, “life comes at you fast”now, faster than ever.... The new SH&E professionals must prepare for not only standard occupational safety and health issues learned, and the ‘nontraditional work environments’ but, in addition, the ‘Unforeseen Catastrophic Incidents’, too! How? Being learned, being trained, being prepared, being aware, being flexible, anticipating, not being too structured, thinking - way beyond, ‘out of the box’, and making those all, contagious to their team of professionals.

We, the other stakeholders in the channel, too must change our thinking to include, to parallel the needs of the first responders and other, on the scene emergency personnel, before hand to be able to assist in their time of need. This all way beyond our traditional parameters and take that which we have learned in standard practices of occupational health and safety and apply as much as feasible those same principles, where and or possible. If you agree, pass it on.

Oh, by the way can you think of any UCI's? Exactly!

Think about it.