

Bookworm

On the Practice of Safety, Third Edition

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Wiley Interscience, Hoboken, NJ, 2003

ISBN 0-471-27275-2

reviewed by John Duffus

This book is already well established through its previous editions as a classic text for baccalaureate and master's degree safety programs. However, I come to it as someone who has never read it before and so can review it as though I were a new student to whom it had been recommended. My first impression was of a textbook that looked dated in layout and, when compared with most modern textbooks, was not very welcoming. This is a pity because the book is a distillation of many years of experience by the author, thoughtfully reviewed and carefully analyzed. Many of his statements remain in the mind after reading: "safety is culture driven," "finance is the language of management," and "safety is freedom from unacceptable risk."

From my personal point of view as a toxicologist, I find it difficult to understand how a book on safety can define a curriculum for the safety professional (Chapter 5), which omits toxicology. In fact, I don't think the subject is mentioned anywhere in the book. This is particularly surprising in a book which considers risk assessment and management very thoroughly. Assessing risk of chemical exposure is often a major part of the risk assessment process.

In spite of the above reservation, I think that some parts of this book could well be prescribed as compulsory reading for safety professionals. Chapter 17, "Guidelines: Designing for Safety," and Chapter 18, "System Safety: the Concept," fall into this category. The relationship of "quality management" to "safety practice" is another important concept developed here.

Although I found this book, as one might expect, very much based on practice in the USA, I was pleased to find attention drawn to the ILO/OSH Guidelines on Occupational Safety and Health Management, which are available on the Web for download at <www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/safework/cops/english/download/e000013.pdf>.

The final discussion of the nature of a safety audit and the guiding thoughts derived by the author from his lifetime experience again should be essential reading for all those concerned with safety.

Having started to read this book with a little reluctance because its layout and appearance were somewhat off putting, I finished reading it with an admiration for the way in which the author had distilled wisdom from his lifetime involvement in practical safety management. This is a book to be read now for its educational value and also to be kept on the shelf for easy future reference. If only it said a bit more about my own area of expertise in toxicology, I should have little to find wrong with it!



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