The International System Safety Society

Canada Chapter presents:

Safety – Complex but Manageable

*A morning workshop at the Nepean Sailing Club*

*May 31, 2012*

7:30 – 8:00 Registration and breakfast

8:00 – 8:15 Introductions and explanation of how the morning will unfold

8:15 – 8:30 Presentation by Dr. Kathleen Sutcliffe

9:00 – 9:15 coffee/bio break

9:15 – 10:00 Presentation by Dr. Brenda Zimmerman

10:00 – 10:10 Presentation of Questions / Points for Discussion by Drs. Sutcliffe and Zimmerman

10:10 – 10:30 Break & prepare for group work

10:30 – 11:50 Group work on the Questions / Points for Discussion, with Drs. Sutcliffe and Zimmerman circulating

11:50 – 12:10 Return to plenary – reports by spokespersons

12:10 – 12:15 Themes and closure to discussion

12:15 – 12:25 Concluding remarks

12:25 – 12:30 Closing points

12:30 Adjournment

Biography and Abstract – Dr Kathleen Sutcliffe

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Kathleen M. Sutcliffe (Ph.D.) is the Gilbert and Ruth Professor of Management and Organizations (and former Associate Dean for Faculty Development and Research) at the Stephen M. Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Michigan, a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Alaska, a Master of Science from the University of Washington, and a Ph.D. in management from the University of Texas at Austin. Before studying for her doctoral degree she lived and worked in urban and rural Alaska (directing a health program for the State of Alaska and as health director for the Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association, one of the Alaska Native Health Corporations headquartered in Anchorage, Alaska). For the past decade her research has been aimed at understanding how organizations and their members cope with uncertainty and unexpected events, and how complex organizations can be designed to be more reliable and resilient. She is currently investigating these issues in wildland firefighting, healthcare, and other high-hazard industries. Her research has appeared in numerous scholarly journals (e.g. *Academic Medicine*, *Medical Care*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Harvard Business Review, Sloan Management Review, Strategic Management Journal, etc.).* Two books include: *Medical Error: What Do We Know? What Do We Do?* (co-authored with Marilynn Rosenthal, Jossey-Bass, 2002); *Managing the Unexpected: Resilient Performance in an Age of Uncertainty* 2nd ed. (co-authored with Karl E. Weick, Jossey-Bass, 2007).

**Managing the Unexpected: Assuring High Performance in an Age of Uncertainty**

Assuring safe and reliable performance in an increasingly complex world requires management of unexpected surprises that can escalate out of control. Our guidance for how to get better at managing the unexpected comes from a set of organizations called High Reliability Organizations (HROs) that remain productive and relatively error-free despite the fact that they face trying conditions day after day. HROs (such as aircraft carriers, nuclear power plants, air traffic control, and wildland firefighting) have been relatively neglected by people who study organizational life and give advice. Our premise is that we all can be more effective if we act more like organizations that have pulled this off for years. In this session we focus on how HROs do it. HROs have a different set of priorities than most organizations, and a set of operating processes and practices that implement these priorities. The differences between HROs and non-HROs lie in how they handle five issues: failure, simplification, operations, resilience, and expertise. Together these practices lead to the capability of mindfulness, which acts as a hedge against the unexpected by enabling the detection of unexpected events earlier in their development when there are more possibilities for resolving them.

Biography and Abstract – Dr Brenda Zimmerman

Director of Health Industry Management Program and

Associate Professor of Strategy/Policy,

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Dr. Brenda Zimmerman is a professor of Strategic Management at the Schulich School of Business at York University in Toronto. She is the founder and Director of the Health Industry Management Program for MBA students. She is also an Associate Faculty Member for the Social Innovation Generation at the University of Waterloo. During 2000-2003, she joined McGill's Faculty of Management as an Associate Professor and had a joint appointment with the Faculty of Medicine. Between 1998-2003, she was a professor in the McGill-McConnell Masters' Program for Voluntary Sector Leaders and the Masters in International Practicing Management Program. Her primary research applies complexity science to management and leadership issues in organizations, especially health care or not-for-profit organizations, experiencing high levels of uncertainty and turbulence. Since 1996 the bulk of her research and teaching has focused on health care. She is a member of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences chronic disease expert panel on Health System Transformation, sits on a committee of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, advises the Canadian Public Health Agency and is the Chair of Patient Safety and Quality for Mount Sinai Hospital. She has been an invited speaker at organizations and conferences in North America and Europe. She has written articles, book chapters and a co-authored book on the topic of complexity and management in health care, “Edgeware: Complexity resources for Healthcare Leaders”. Her latest co-authored book, “Getting to Maybe: How the World is Changed” is a Canadian best seller published in 2006, published in Japan in 2008 and in Korea in 2009.

She is active in her community locally, nationally and internationally and in 2006 was awarded the Athena award in recognition of her community contributions and mentoring of women to reach their full potential. In 2009, she was awarded the Teacher Excellence Award for the Schulich School of Business.

**The Difference between Safety in Simple, Complicated and Complex Challenges**

We long for simple solutions to safety challenges, are drawn to mechanical solutions or rigid protocols that prescribe one-size-fits-all remedies. However, these solutions can backfire if they are prescribed for situations that are truly complex. In this workshop, we will argue that one of the first challenges in dealing with safety is discerning whether we are dealing with simple, complicated or complex challenges. We will focus on both conceptual and practical approaches to deal with safety in complex systems. All complex systems, from human beings to stock markets to global organizations, share behaviours that cannot be explained by their parts. The whole is different than the sum of the parts. You cannot fully understand a human body by describing it as a list of parts, just as an organization chart barely scratches the surface in describing an organization. In complex systems, relationships are key. Connections or relationships define how complex systems work; an organization is its relationships not its organization chart. And this perception is crucial in understanding how safety in complex systems differs from simple or complicated systems.

Description of Group Work

After the presentations, Drs. Sutcliffe and Zimmerman will be asking poignant questions or leaving you with thoughts for discussion. They will also circulate between the groups during the discussion.

In pre-assigned groups of 6 – 8, groups will need to elect

1. A spokesperson and
2. A secretary

You will also need to collectively decide which topics you’ll tackle during your 80 minutes of discussion.

The role of the spokesperson will be to give a brief summary to the plenary of the discussion that took place.

The role of the secretary is to

1. Write down group members names and contact information (only if the member decides to disclose such information)
2. Take notes during the discussion
3. Type up the group membership (if provided), the topics discussed and the notes of the discussion
4. E-mail c) above to [thewi025@uottawa.ca](mailto:thewi025@uottawa.ca) by June 7, 2012

Paper and pens will be provided at each table – but feel free to bring your own laptops!

On June 11, 2012, I will send to all participants the typed up notes I will have received from all the groups.

Tanya Hewitt

Programme Chair

Canada Chapter

System Safety Society

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