

Heinrich's theories

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Article Summary

The article is about the deconstruction of two myths derived by the works of H. W. Heinrich. Herbert William Heinrich worked as an assistant Superintendent of the Engineering and Inspection Division of Travelers Insurance Company. In 1931 he published his book *Industrial Accident Prevention, A scientific Approach*. This book revealed an empirical finding which later was known as Heinrich's Law. His law believed that industrial accidents are due to 88% unsafe acts of persons, 10% unsafe mechanical or physical conditions and 2% unpreventable or certain causes. In this law he considered unsafe acts of the person as the main root cause of industrial accidents.

In this article the view of Heinrich is not supported and it is suggested that the two myths (1) unsafe act and behavior of workers are the principal cause of the industrial accidents (2) decreasing accident rate will homogenously diminish severe injuries derived from the law of Heinrich should be removed from the practice of safety.

Freud A. Manuele, the writer of this article reports that Heinrich's law about the industrial accidents and its causes does not apply to the current situations and thinking. In his article He quotes work of different people who has worked on the same area. He is of the view that knowledge derived from those works seem to have been evolved in the aspects of how accidents take place and their contributing factors.

The writer cites different works on industrial accidents and their main causes, these works does not support Heinrich's point of view but talks on

different dimensions. The writer concludes that recent emphasis is on refining the work system and not only on behavior of worker. In the conclusion the writer also makes a demand to employ modern methods that look beyond Heinrich's myths in order to detect factual causal factors in industrial accidents.

I. Critique

The Article begins with the critical appreciation of Heinrich by calling him the 'pioneer' in the field of accident prevention and considering him to be the promoter of occupational safety and health. Though the article is about dislodging Heinrich's law it also seems to appreciate his work to be the literature and background to the study which is the positive aspect to Heinrich's work.

This article continues with Heinrich, focusing on the negative aspects of his work by stating his work to be unsound and not valid because of the un-authentication of the kind of methodology and survey documents used by him for the analysis.

The Article considers Heinrich's work to be a non-researched work and makes a call that such work should not be used as a source, but the focus should be driven towards the current knowledge.

He supports his view by quoting approved researches and work done on industrial accidents. For example he quotes Walton (Manuele, 56) who is of the view that 85% of the problems in any operation are within the system and are dependably of management, while only 15% lie with the worker which is opposite to what Heinrich's point of view.

Thus, to conclude it can be said that the Article is about the criticism of

Heinrich's work. The Article suggests that Heinrich's work was not valid and should not be practiced as times have changed and new methods should be applied on current situations. He seems to draw the focus of the audience on the fact that knowledge has evolved recently and the emphasis is now laid on the improving of work system rather than on worker. The article also gives a reminder that logically tested methods should be applied, and safety professional should take care and actions to dislodge invalid myths that cannot withstand logic tests.

References:

Manuele, Fred A. " Professional Development Peer-Reviewed-Reviewing Heinrich-Dislodging Two Myths From the Practice of Safety." Professional Safety 56. 10 (2011): 52.