

The Blameworthiness of Health and Safety Rule Violations

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ABSTRACT

Man-made disasters usually lead to the tightening of safety regulations, because rule breaking is seen as a major cause of them. This reaction is based on the presumptions that the safety rules are good and that the rule-breakers are wrong. The reasons the personnel of a coke factory gave for breaking rules raise doubt about the tenability of these presumptions. It is unlikely that this result would have been achieved on the basis of a disaster evaluation or High-Reliability Theory. In both approaches, knowledge of the consequences of human conduct hinders an unprejudiced judgement about the blameworthiness of rule breaking.

BIOGRAPHY

PETER MASCINI is assistant professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Erasmus University of Rotterdam and researcher at the Scientific Research and Documentation Center (WODC) of the Dutch Ministry of Justice. He has published predominantly on the implementation of policy and on enforcement.