

Safety Corner

What is Safety?

The term safety is defined in many technical safety textbooks as “quality or state of being safe; freedom from harm or danger.” I did a web search on the definition of safety. Here are some of the search results, which, more or less, characterize safety as a condition, a state or a status.

- Freedom from those conditions, which can cause injury or death to personnel, damage to or loss of equipment or property.
- The condition of being protected against failure, damage, error, accidents, or harm. Protection involves here both causing and exposure.
- The state of being certain that adverse effects will not be caused by some agent under defined conditions.
- A status, which is extensively free of adverse effects or is regarded as non-dangerous.
- The provision and control of work environment systems and human behaviour which together give relative freedom from those conditions and circumstances which can cause personal injury, disease or death, or property damage.

On the other hand, some define safety using its reciprocal – risk:

- Safety describes a state in which the remaining risk is judged to be acceptable.
- A judgment of the acceptability of risk (a measure of the probability of an adverse outcome and its severity) associated with using a technology in a given situation.

As the definition of safety varies from textbooks to textbooks, the practice of safety also leads to different implications in different engineering disciplines and industries. To aid our fellow engineers to find out what safety is, we will dedicate this column to address the many facets of safety disciplines, terminologies, applications, implication, regulations, standards, technologies, etc. We will adopt a “What is...” or “How to...” style with an objective to broaden the knowledge of our fellow engineers on safety subjects and raise our awareness on safety technologies within the HKIE.

We hope you will enjoy our Column.

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