

ICAM

INVESTIGATIONS

MADE EASY

ICAM without the noise, jargon,
or over-complication

From the author of [The Art of Investigation](#)

BRUCE WALPOLE

Introduction

Why This Book Exists

ICAM is not meant to be hard.

Yet many people finish an ICAM course feeling unsure. They understand the steps while they are in the room, but once they are back at work, the confidence fades. The form feels heavy. The boxes feel confusing. The investigation starts to feel like paperwork instead of learning.

This book exists because that gap should not exist.

ICAM was designed to help people understand why incidents happen so they can be prevented from happening again. It was never meant to be about blame. It was never meant to be about ticking boxes. And it was never meant to waste time.

Over the years, ICAM has become more complicated than it needs to be. Templates have grown. Codes have multiplied. Investigations have become longer, but not always better. As a result, people rush, overthink, or rely on generic answers just to get the job finished.

This book is here to strip ICAM back to what actually matters.

It is written for people who are:

- new to ICAM
- expected to run or contribute to investigations
- reviewing ICAMs without really understanding them
- frustrated that investigations take too long and achieve too little
- looking for something practical they can rely on

You do not need prior experience to read this book.

You do not need to memorise codes.

You do not need to be an investigator by trade.

You just need to want to understand what happened and learn from it properly.

What This Book Will Do

This book will help you:

- understand ICAM in plain English
- know what to focus on and what to ignore
- run investigations without overthinking them
- identify meaningful causes, not just obvious ones
- write findings that make sense to others
- develop recommendations that actually get used
- complete investigations faster without cutting corners

Most importantly, it will help you feel confident doing

again.

What This Book Will Not Do

This is not a technical manual.

It is not a list of rules.

It is not written to impress anyone.

It will not:

- drown you in theory
- expect you to memorise ICAM codes
- turn investigations into a paperwork exercise
- tell you what to think

Instead, it will show you **how to think**, so the tools make sense when you use them.

How to Use This Book

You can read this book from start to finish, or you can dip into it when you need help.

If you are new to ICAM, start at the beginning.

If you are rusty, focus on Parts 2 and 3.

If you are stuck in an investigation, Part 4 is designed to help you reset.

Keep it nearby. Use it as a reference. Come back to it when something does not feel right.

If, at the end of this book, ICAM feels clearer, simpler, and more useful — then it has done its job.

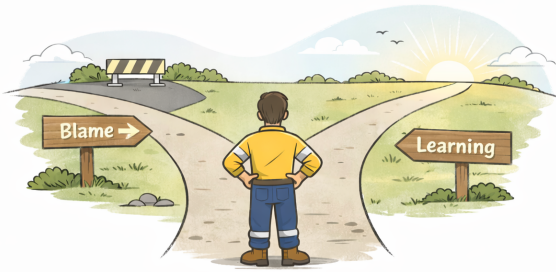


Figure 1: Blame vs Learning

ICAM is a choice. Investigations can follow the path of blame, which leads to dead ends, or the path of learning, which leads to understanding and prevention.

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Chapter 1 - What ICAM Is – and What It Is Not

ICAM as a System of Influence

How factors shape events from top to bottom.

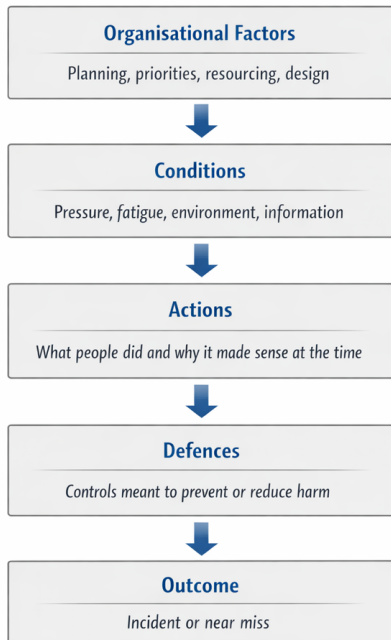


Figure 2: ICAM as a System of Influence

This diagram shows how organisational decisions shape conditions, influence actions, affect defences, and combine to produce outcomes.

Before you can use ICAM properly, you need to be clear about one thing:

ICAM is not a form.

The form is just how many organisations record the outcome.

ICAM itself is a way of **thinking about incidents**.

When people struggle with ICAM, it is usually because they are trying to complete a document without understanding what the method is trying to do.

So let's clear that up first.

What ICAM Is

ICAM is a **structured way of understanding why an incident happened**.

Not just what happened.

Not who was involved.

But **why the outcome made sense at the time**, given the conditions people were working in.

ICAM helps you:

- look beyond the obvious
- understand how decisions were shaped
- identify weaknesses in systems, not just behaviour
- learn how similar incidents could happen again

At its core, ICAM is about **learning**, not judging.

It assumes that:

- people usually come to work to do a good job
- decisions are made with the information available at the time
- outcomes are influenced by systems, pressures, and conditions

That does not mean people are never accountable.

It means accountability comes **after understanding**, not before.

What ICAM Is Not

ICAM is **not** a way to find someone to blame.

If you start an investigation looking for fault, ICAM will not help you.

You will end up:

- stopping at “human error”

- selecting generic causes
- recommending more training
- repeating the same incidents later

ICAM is also **not** about capturing every detail.

More information does not always mean better understanding.

Good ICAM investigations are **focused**, not exhaustive.

And ICAM is **not** about filling every box on the form.

If you are selecting causes just to make the form complete, you are no longer investigating — you are administering paperwork.

The Problem ICAM Was Designed to Fix

Before methods like ICAM, many investigations stopped too early.

They ended with conclusions like:

- the worker failed to follow procedure
- the worker was not paying attention
- the worker made a poor decision

These statements feel neat, but they explain nothing.

ICAM exists because those answers do not prevent incidents from happening again.

ICAM pushes you to ask:

- Why did the procedure not work in practice?
- What made the decision reasonable at the time?
- What conditions influenced behaviour?
- What in the system allowed this to happen?

When you ask better questions, you get better outcomes.

ICAM as a Way of Thinking

You can use ICAM **without a template**.

You can apply ICAM thinking in:

- toolbox talks
- task planning
- supervisor conversations
- safety reviews
- management discussions

Any time you ask:

- “What was supposed to stop this?”
- “What made sense to the person at the time?”
- “What was happening around them?”
- “What does this say about how our system really works?”

You are thinking in ICAM terms.

The form just helps capture that thinking when a formal inves-

tigation is required.

A Simple Way to Remember ICAM

If you remember nothing else, remember this:

ICAM helps you understand how work is actually done, not how it is imagined.

That single idea underpins everything that follows.

In the next chapter, we will look at **what ICAM is actually trying to achieve**, and why so many investigations miss the point even when they use the right words.



About the Author

Bruce Walpole is a leading expert in workplace safety investigations, with more than two decades of experience across law enforcement, regulatory agencies, and major infrastructure projects. His career spans frontline policing as a Detective Sergeant with the Queensland Police, senior investigative roles within government safety regulators, and oversight of high-risk investigations on major projects including the multi billion dollar Snowy Hydro 2.0 development.

As a regulator, Bruce was involved in the investigation of some of Australia's most serious workplace incidents, including early industrial manslaughter matters, giving him a deep understanding of how investigations are examined by regulators and courts. This experience now underpins his practical, defensible approach to incident investigation.

Bruce is the founder of **QualSafe Investigations**, a consultancy dedicated exclusively to investigative practice and capability building. He is a recognised voice in modern safety thinking,

blending traditional investigative rigour with learning-focused, new-view principles. He has spoken at national investigator forums, trained safety professionals and supervisors across multiple industries, and holds a Graduate Certificate in Safety Leadership from Griffith University.

This book reflects Bruce's commitment to making investigations clearer, more consistent, and more meaningful for those required to conduct them. **ICAM Investigations Made Easy** was written to demystify ICAM, remove unnecessary complexity, and provide supervisors and safety practitioners with a practical framework they can confidently apply in real workplaces.

Bruce's focus is not on perfect paperwork, but on better thinking, better questions, and better outcomes, so investigations lead to learning and improvement, not blame.

— **Bruce Walpole**

Founder, QualSafe Investigations

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