

Organizational Accidents



British Petroleum (BP)

The term organizational accidents was first coined by James Reason. These are described as an incident that affects organizations instead of individuals and is often catastrophic in nature. Serious incidents often have very different causal chains when compared to other incidents.

British Petroleum is a successful multinational oil company that has had tremendous success over the course of the 20th century. Oil and gas is an arena with many significant risks. An arena in which BP was very successful.

In 2010, British Petroleum came to the world's attention after the explosion aboard Deepwater Horizon. Many were surprised by this incident. Most were shocked at BP's inability to respond quickly and contain the spill. In truth, this was at the end of a string of failures spanning many years.

Through the lens of Hypercompliance, will explore the failures in North America that led towards Deepwater Horizon. Tracing an arc over many years, several incidents will be reviewed. Although there are many to choose from, only incidents occurring in North America will be referenced.

Using the insights of independent investigations from agencies like the US Chemical Safety Board, we will explore the commonality of failures that ultimately enabled the incident aboard the Deepwater Horizon.