

77 OF THE MOST CLASSIC And FAMOUS SAFETY QUOTES

Please feel free to add your favourites in the comments section below.

“The use of silly and meaningless safety language matters, it creates a distraction and delusion that safety and risk are being addressed. We may feel good about speaking such words but they dumb down culture and distract people from taking safety seriously”.

My favourite safety quote for an ice breaker or for anyone who says “it will never happen to me” is by Captain EJ Smith (Captain of the Titanic – quoted in the press just before sailing):

“When any one asks me how I can best describe my experiences of nearly forty years at sea I merely say uneventful. Of course, there have been Winter gales and storms and fog and the like, but in all my experience I have never been in an accident of any sort worth speaking about. I have seen but one vessel in distress in all my years at sea, a brig, the crew of which was taken off in a small boat in charge of my third officer. I never saw a wreck and have never been wrecked, nor was I ever in any predicament that threatened to end in disaster of any sort.

“I will say that I cannot imagine any condition which could cause a ship to founder. I cannot conceive of any vital disaster happening to this vessel. Modern shipbuilding has gone beyond that.”

Classic Safety Quotes

- ***If people are good only because they fear punishment, and hope for reward, then we are a sorry lot indeed. — Albert Einstein***
- Once silly safety rules are implemented, with no consultation or critical thinking, then the same silly leaders who enacted them will surely not be brave enough to retract them! [HERE](#)
- **Much easier to sell an answer than a question. Much more comforting to sit in delusion than reality. – Dr Rob Long**
- What is the difference between the Pokemon Go craze and Safety’s obsession with hunting for and controlling hazards? Both achieve nothing but disconnect us from people and reality.

- **“The point is that being able to demonstrate ‘due diligence’ is not about *having* a thing (a policy or a system or a heap of procedures and checklists) it is about *doing* a thing” – [Max Geyer](#)**
- “Thank god we don’t have to rely on the brilliance of the safety trade to determine what is art, history, aesthetics, dance or intelligence, I think safety would paint over the Mona Lisa if they thought it was unsafe”. – Rob Long <https://safetyrisk.net/linking-out-of-linkedin/>
- **“Spruiking zero harm or crusading safety ‘because you care’ raises as much suspicion as having a folder on your computer named ‘DEFINITELY NOT PORN’ – would you get on a plane that had “ZERO CRASH” emblazoned all over it?” – Dave Collins**
- “We would also ask real estate agents, how much they think our house is worth. But we never ask a safety professional, socially, how do I stay safe at work. In my experience, when people find out I am a safety professional, there is a deafening silence as, either, people don’t know that safety has a profession or my skills just seem irrelevant”. Kevin Jones – [HERE](#)
- **“Luckily my company has a Zero Harm Policy so I don’t have to worry about safety as much as others do” – Supervisor from a Tier 1 organisation**
- “we believe that we want to do what we are doing, otherwise how would we explain to others why we are doing it?” – Chris Paley “Unthink” p95
- **“Now: target zero; zero harm; no accidents, although they all look good on paper, they all focus on what you want to avoid. Imagine setting your business goals at the start of the year and presenting a goal of wanting to avoid any financial loss this coming year to the board. They would boot you straight out of the room! So, for what reason do we accept that with safety?” – Chad Lilley**
- “Our systems have become the equivalent of the Internet – it’s where you go to get answers without even really knowing the question or the context. Through the excessive use of processes, procedure, checklists and forms we have dumbed down their curiosity.” John Green
- **“Off the shelf Safety Systems – if you want a good dust collector, buy a vacuum cleaner” – Dave Collins**
- “Paper doesn’t save people, people save people” – Dan Peterson
- **“Like love, we cannot get enough safety, but not the kind we are used to – what would happen to love if every day were Valentines Day? So flooded are we with contrived and controlling safety that it is becoming dangerous” [HERE](#)**

- “There is no such thing as an accident, only a failure to recognise the hand of fate” – Napoleon
- **“He uses statistics as a drunken man uses lamp posts...for support rather than illumination”** (Scottish poet – Andrew Lang)
- “Traditional Safety is not enough, but traditional safety is too much” [Safety Crusaders Anonymous](#)
- **“Also, they may simply have been blinded by their zeal to do something quick and easy for safety – and thus doing nothing for it.”** – Gerald Wilde
- If Safety is “Zero Harm” then Love must be “Zero Hate” – Dave Collins
- **“For if you suffer your people to be ill-educated, and their manners to be corrupted from their infancy, and then punish them for those crimes to which their first education disposed them, what else is to be concluded from this, but that you first make thieves and then punish them.”** – Thomas More’s book “Utopia” – quoted in the movie “Ever After – A Cinderella Story”
- “For if you force your people to stick rigidly to procedures, and their thinking to be stifled from their induction, and then blame them for failing to recognise a changed condition (and suffering an injury) to which their first education disposed them, what else is to be concluded from this, but that you first make robots and then punish them (for being robotic).” [Max Geyer](#)
- **“At their level of skill, driving like an average driver may be intolerably boring. Imagine being a master of Beethoven and all you are allowed to play is “Twinkle, twinkle, little star”! (Wilde, 2014, p79)”** – [HERE](#)
- “The language of ‘bloody idiot’ and ‘common sense’ is everywhere in industry and demonstrates a profound inability to understand sensemaking, mindfulness, perception and motivation”. by Dr Rob Long here: [Its Projection You Bloody Idiot](#)
- **“If safety is ‘common sense’ then we need no trainers, training programs, safety officers, inductions or [safety legislation](#)”** from this article: by Rob Long here: <https://safetyrisk.net/common-sense-is-non-sense/>
- “Safety is 30% Common Sense, 80% Compliance and the rest is good luck” – [Barry Spud](#)
- **“Stress is not bad but a necessary part of facing life’s challenges. Whilst the dreamers maintain the delusion that ‘all accidents are preventable’ the rest of us know that the bumps and challenges of life are necessary for learning, resilience and maturation. There can be no resilience without stress, and no learning without risk.”** Dr Rob Long – HERE: [Safety Under Stress](#)

- “The biggest problem with safety is that managers and safety professionals often engage in acts of public masturbation” – [George Robotham](#) – [HERE](#)
- **“I’m just not that into safety any more”** – **Rob Sams** – [HERE](#)
- “if we accept that there is no such thing as ‘zero risk’ then we should not spin the meaning of words with assertions such as ‘all accidents are preventable’. Dr Rob Long – [HERE](#)
- **“when everyone agrees with me it’s time for me to quit”** – [Phil LaDuke](#)
- “We can get a monkey in here to try hard; you get no points for being stupid” – [Phil LaDuke](#)
- **“For every misunderstood genius there are 100 perfectly understood idiots”** – [Phil LaDuke](#)
- We make thousands of decisions everyday in automatic mode without a mistake. Yet we don’t reflect and celebrate this wonderful mode of human decision making at work rather, we put the blow torch on the one moment when it doesn’t work and something goes wrong. – Dr Rob Long
- **“If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.”** – **Nelson Mandela**
- “Eliminate slogans, exhortations, and targets for the work force asking for zero defects and new levels of productivity. Such exhortations only create adversarial [relationships](#), as the bulk of the causes of low quality and low productivity belong to the system and thus lie beyond the power of the work force” – W. Edwards Deming
- **“Do I believe in the concept of Zero Harm? Let’s just say I believe that nothing is impossible”** – **Dave Collins**
- “Anyone who loves the concept of Zero Harm obviously has nothing to love” – Dave Collins
- **“Measuring Safety Performance by the number of injuries you have is like measuring parenting by the number of smacks you give”** – **Dr Robert Long**
- “Telling me to be careful is very different to saving my life” – [Phil LaDuke](#)
- **“Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.”**— **Albert Einstein**
- “Concern for man himself and his safety must always for the chief interest of all technical endeavours.” -Albert Einstein

- **“Anyone who believes that they have common sense has simply forgotten who taught them what they know.” – [Alan Quilley](#)**
- [Injuries Happen When Workers Get Caught Between the Official Way Versus the Real Way](#) – Phil Laduke
- **“A prudent man foresees the difficulties ahead and prepares for them; the simpleton goes blindly on and suffers the consequences.” Proverbs 22:3**
- “Any intelligent fool can make things bigger, more complex, and more violent. It takes a touch of genius — and a lot of courage — to move in the opposite direction.” — Albert Einstein
- **“Imagination is more important than knowledge.” — Albert Einstein**
- “What is now proven was once only imagined.” Hindsight is a wonderful thing but foresight is better, especially when it comes to saving life, or some pain! – William Blake
- **Was it wrong to have sex with the cleaning woman on my desk? If I had only seen the safety compliance video, this wouldn't have been a problem. George, Seinfeld**
- “People don't care what you know until they know you care” – Corrie Pitzer, Safemap International, from 2009 PPHSA presentation
- **“Out of clutter find simplicity; From discord find harmony; In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity” – Einstein**
- “Safety is not an intellectual exercise to keep us in work. It is a matter of life and death. It is the sum of our contributions to safety management that determines whether the people we work with live or die” – Sir Brian Appleton after Piper Alpha
- **“Cease dependence on inspection to achieve quality. Eliminate the need for massive inspection by building quality into the product in the first place.” – W. Edwards Deming**
- “Whenever there is fear, you will get wrong figures”. – W. Edwards Deming
- **“Zero Harm” is a “do not” target. “Do” targets are possible, while “do not” is often impossible. The focus should be on aspects like “the best available and reasonable safety practices”, or “improved measures” or “better hazard/ risk identification.” These are things that can be done. If you tell me “do not get injured”, I am going to ask you “How will I not get injured?” What will your**

answer be? (If you do have an answer, I bet it will probably be a list of things I should DO.) – Wynand Serfontein – 2014

- “What a strange sense of logic to fixate on the absence of something (injury) as a demonstration of the presence of something else (safety). Such a proposition misunderstands the dynamic of risk and being human.” – Dr Robert Long – 2014
- **Quote from Weick. Managing the Unexpected p. 67. ‘Nowhere in this book will you find any mention of perfection, zero errors, flawless performance, or infallible humans. That’s because human fallibility is like gravity, weather, and terrain, just another foreseeable hazard. Error is pervasive. The unexpected is pervasive. By now that message should be clear. What is not pervasive are well-developed skills to detect and contain these errors at their early stages’**
- “If your world is just about safety, then your world is too small” – Dr Rob Long – [HERE](#)
- **When planning your next family holiday would you get “Zero Harm” T-shirts printed for all the kids and tell them that the main aim of the holiday is not to get hurt? – Dave Collins**
- Would your loved ones prefer to be told: “I will never hurt you” OR “I will always love you”? Dave Collins
- **“The real enemy of safety is not non-compliance but non-thinking” Dr Rob Long – [HERE](#)**
- “It seems that [risk aversion](#) is the best excuse for the day when you want compliance. Every time something is banned or restricted it is because it’s a ‘safety requirement’. No wonder people think safety is an embuggerance! When we want to bamboozle people who don’t know the Act or Regulation we can mystify, dazzle and mesmerize them with its a ‘safety requirement’ when in reality it is often a convenience behind the scenes to make someone’s life easier.”
- **“Rules are parts of systems and systems serve humans not humans serve systems. Unfortunately, safety engineers seem to think that humans serve systems.”**
- “The concept of the bonus paterfamilias is not that of a timorous faintheart always in trepidation lest he or others suffer some injury; on the contrary, he ventures out into the world, engages in affairs and takes reasonable chances. He takes reasonable precautions to protect his person and property and expects others to do likewise.” South African Judge (1954)
- **“if your understanding of safety is dynamite, you would not have enough to blow your nose”**

- “Let’s manage safety recognizing how humans are and stop managing safety the way we wish humans were.” – Alan Quilley
- **“Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear, not absence of fear.” ~Mark Twain**
- *Too often we exaggerate the risk of a hazard and categorize what is merely possible as probable because it is easier to enforce than if we make an honest assessment. Some safety professionals, in the name of “zero-injuries” will heap regulation after regulation on a job until the organization rebels and simply refuses to comply. When it comes to making the workplace safer, the more complex and/or burdensome the solution the far less likely the compliance. We have to understand that there are limits to the amount of protection we can provide to people and if when exceed the perceived reasonable limits we not only fail to protect in that instance but we lose credibility and jeopardize compliance with safety protocols that are essential for basic safety. When safety professionals’ risk tolerance is out of alignment with societal norms the safety professional is doomed to a life of frustration. – Phil Laduke*
- Dr Rae Drew is quoted as making the following excellent points: (HERE : [Why Can't Safety be a Positive Thing](#))
- “If you’re a lawyer, you talk about great law cases. If you’re an engineer, you talk about giant monuments or innovations,”
- “The stories that other disciplines have all have heroes, and in safety, our stories don’t. Our stories have villains and they have victims.”
- “I think mostly we tell stories simply in order to motivate people through fear.”
- “Our big ideas in safety result from disasters like Deepwater Horizon, Chernobyl and Piper Alpha”
- “We use stories of the past to tell us what we should have done, and then we turn those into stories about the future: what we should do instead or bad things are going to happen,”
- “What I find most sinister is that we don’t just do this with the big accidents... We do it with very human stories as well”
- “We figuratively and sometimes quite literally drag out maimed and injured people as object moral lessons in the ways people should behave. We say, ‘This is what happens to you if you don’t follow the instructions.’”

- “Essentially what we’re doing is we’re drawing upon the ghosts of disaster past and spectres of disaster future and we’re using it to justify the bureaucracy we want to put into the present.”

JAMES REASON’S 4 SAFETY PARADOX’S

- 1) Safety is defined and measured more by its absence than its presence.
- 2) Defences, barriers and safeguards not only protect a system, they can also cause its catastrophic breakdown.
- 3) Many organisations seek to limit the variability of human action, primarily to minimise error, but it is this same variability – in the form of timely adjustments to unexpected events – that maintains safety in a dynamic and changing world.
- 4) An unquestioning belief in the attainability of absolute safety can seriously impede the achievement of realisable safety goals, while a preoccupation with failure can lead to high reliability.

Famous Safety Quotes

From www.quote garden.com:

- Out of this nettle, danger, we pluck this flower, safety. ~William Shakespeare
 - For safety is not a gadget but a state of mind. ~Eleanor Everet
 - Safety doesn’t happen by accident. ~Author Unknown
 - “Safety First” is “Safety Always.” ~Charles M. Hayes
 - Better a thousand times careful than once dead. ~Proverb
 - Precaution is better than cure. ~Edward Coke
 - Safety is a cheap and effective insurance policy. ~Author Unknown
 - Who can hope to be safe? who sufficiently cautious?
 - Guard himself as he may, every moment’s an ambush. ~Horace
 - Safety means first aid to the uninjured. ~Author Unknown
 - Accidents, and particularly street and highway accidents, do not happen – they are caused. ~Ernest Greenwood

- Prepare and prevent, don't repair and repent. ~Author Unknown
- Chance takers are accident makers. ~Author Unknown
- Hug your kids at home, but belt them in the car. ~Author Unknown
- It's better to crash into a nap than to nap into a crash. ~Author Unknown
- Luck runs out but safety is good for life. ~Author Unknown
- There is no safety in numbers, or in anything else. ~James Thurber
- Accidents hurt – safety doesn't. ~Author Unknown
- Working safely may get old, but so do those who practice it. ~Author Unknown
- The door to safety swings on the hinges of common sense. ~Author Unknown
- Working without safety is a dead-end job. ~Author Unknown
- Know safety, no injury. No safety, know injury. ~Author Unknown
- We now have unshakable conviction that accident causes are man-made and that a man made problem can be solved by men and women. ~W.H. Cameron
- Carelessness doesn't bounce; it shatters. ~Hartman Jule
- Safety never takes a holiday. ~Author Unknown
- When you gamble with safety, you bet your life. ~Author Unknown
- While on a ladder, never step back to admire your work. ~Author Unknown
- Hearing protection is a sound investment. ~Author Unknown
- To learn about eye protection, ask someone who has one. ~Author Unknown
- Your safety gears are between your ears. ~Author Unknown
- Personal protective equipment is self-defense. ~Author Unknown
- Tomorrow – your reward for working safely today. ~Author Unknown
- Unsafe acts will keep you in stitches. ~Author Unknown
- Don't learn safety by accident. ~Author Unknown

- Road sense is the offspring of courtesy and the parent of safety. ~Australian Traffic Rule, quoted in *Quotations for Special Occasions* by Maud van Buren, 1938
- Safety is as simple as ABC – Always Be Careful. ~Author Unknown
- Safety isn't expensive, its priceless. ~Author Unknown
- Be alert! Accidents hurt. ~Author Unknown
- Better dead sure than sure dead. ~Author Unknown
- When safety is a factor, call in a contractor. ~Author Unknown
- Wishing won't keep you safe – safety will. ~Author Unknown
- Working safely is like breathing – if you don't, you die. ~Author Unknown
- The safest risk is the one you didn't take. ~Author Unknown
- Safety isn't just a slogan, it's a way of life. ~Author Unknown

Quotable Quotes for Safety and Leadership

By [George Robotham](#)

Quotable Quotes

Introduction

Quotes from respected sources can be a means of effectively transmitting messages of a range of topics .The following are quotable quotes that have worked for me in OHS and related areas.

Quotable Quotes

“The people are fashioned according to the example of their king and edicts are less powerful than the life (example) of the king” *Claudian, c. 365, Egyptian epic poet*

“When initiating change remember, People support what they create.” The 6 P rule is very important in change – “Prior Preparation and Planning Prevents Poor Performance”.

“Attempting too big a change and / or changing things too quickly can create an adverse reaction and alienate the very people you want to make allies. Learn the context, culture and past before trying to make changes. Unless a crisis situation is apparent realise effective change requires a lot of effort and time”

“A health & safety problem can be described by statistics but cannot be understood by statistics. It can only be understood by knowing and feeling the pain, anguish, and depression and shattered hopes of the victim and of wives, husbands, parents, children, grandparents and friends, and the hope, struggle and triumph of recovery and rehabilitation in a world often unsympathetic, ignorant, unfriendly and unsupportive, only those with close experience of life altering personal damage have this understanding”

OHS is about “Change for the Future NOT Blame for the Past”

An ex-manager of mine used to say “Bring me solutions, not problems” The best way to influence management is to provide solutions and not bury them in problems. Another ex-manager said “If you cannot manage safety, you cannot manage”

General Norman Schwarzkopf said” Failures in leadership are invariably failures in character rather than competence”

Professor T.J. Larkin says “If it is not face-to-face it is not communication”.

“Nothing is more central to an organisation’s effectiveness than its ability to transmit accurate, relevant and understandable information among its members.”

“There is nothing more difficult than change” Machiavelli

General Colin Powell is reported as saying you should worry when soldiers no longer come to you with their problems. This is because they have either concluded that you cannot help or you do not care, either is a crisis in leadership.

That Chinese chap is reported as saying the trouble with common sense is it is neither common nor sensible.

“Who dares wins” Australian S.A.S. Regiment

“Doing the impossible is fun”

“It is easier to ask for forgiveness than permission”

“Management focus is the key to quality safety performance. Like all other management functions highly effective leadership is essential in OHS” BHP

“The greatest motivator is not money. It is the opportunity to learn, grow in responsibilities, to contribute and be recognised”.

“ Have huge but realistic goals” Various authors.

Do the simplest thing that will work.

Be a life-long learner and encourage those in your team to be the same, I see an important part of my role is to help those in the safety team to develop their skills.
George Robotham

“If you cannot solve a problem it is because you are playing by the rules” George Robotham

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**Published by : D. L. Shah Trust,
Bell Building, 2nd Floor,
Sir P. M. Road
Mumbai 400001
email: dlshahtrust@yahoo.co.in
Ph: 022-2283 8890
Subscription: Free on request
(soft copy only)**

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