

## **Risk Assessment**

My coach / adviser / mentor / guide on safety, Geoff McDonald is a big critic of risk assessment and I recently explored his thinking on this topic. He has compelling arguments against the technique backed up by extensive research and literature. Rather than present his arguments half-heartedly I will leave it until Geoff finishes preparing his paper on the topic.

I have developed 3 risk assessment courses in my time, being an enlightened adult learning facilitator I made sure there were lots of practical exercises where participants could play with and critically reflect on the concepts. One thing I noticed on all 3 courses was that when different groups were set a risk assessment task on the same job the risk ratings were often different. When questioned on this the groups had good reasons why their ratings for Probability, Consequence and Exposure were different. Variations seemed to stem from differences in group members experience with the particular risk and their personality type. All this said to me the risk assessment process was subjective, it is not a precise method and it is dangerous to get too carried away with the risk ratings and make go / no go decisions based on risk assessment only. Risk assessment is the cornerstone of much safety legislation and many company safety approaches, my advice is to be aware of its limitations.