

SAFETY CRITICAL INCIDENT COMMAND TEAM RESEARCH

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In the oil and gas industry, well-trained incident command teams are critical for assessing and minimising the magnitude and impact of emergencies on offshore facilities. To this end, there is a need to forward global research in effective incident management and support industry stakeholders in training incident command personnel.

Researchers from the University of Western Australia and Curtin University's Future of Work Institute have been conducting research in collaboration with ERGT Australia since 2010 to provide evidence-based recommendations for the training and development of Incident Command Teams. ERGT and the Western Australian based oil and gas industry have provided UWA ongoing access to trainees and personnel to collect data and contribute new findings to the growing body of research in Extreme Action Teams. Extreme action teams are highly skilled specialist teams cooperating under extraordinary demands involving high risk to team members, employees, or the wider public, thus the tasks they perform are urgent and highly consequential.

Since 2010, researchers affiliated with the University of Western Australia Business School and Curtin University's Future of Work Institute have collaborated with ERGT Australia to explore what leadership behaviours and factors more directly related to the team itself, contribute to the effectiveness of incident command teams and safety leadership.

This research has been undertaken in three primary stages, which coincide with three studies.

- **Stage 1** of this project commenced in 2010. This stage included an initial **context immersion** phase and an **interview-based study**. The aims of this stage focused on the behaviours and effectiveness of leaders in incident command teams.
- **Stage 2** commenced in 2012 and comprised an **analysis of archival videos**. The aims of this stage expanded on those from the previous stage, focusing on the timing and frequency of leader behaviours.
- **Stage 3** commenced in 2017 and comprised an **experience sampling study** of incident command training scenarios. The aims of this stage again expanded on those from the previous stages to include a broadened range of leader states and a consideration of team factors.

Now that the research has concluded its data collection, it is time to turn the research and findings into application. ERGT's approach to lifelong learning and ongoing skills maintenance training is aimed at the continued enhancement of the performance of Incident Commanders and the Command teams by

incorporating the research findings into ongoing skills maintenance training. Based on the findings, researchers have put forward six recommendations to guide the training of both leaders and team members. Several of these are rooted in the well-evidenced practice of behavioural modelling.

In the next phase ERGT will incorporate the findings of this research which has highlighted the importance of a range of **leader psychological states and behaviours** for facilitating effective incident management, including **felt confidence, displays of both confidence and calmness, and reduced micromanagement**.

In particular, Stage 3 of this research has highlighted the importance of these behaviours for facilitating **desirable psychological states among team members** - namely **team goal clarity, team flexible initiative, team confidence and team calmness**. Given that team members perform many of the direct actions involved in managing incidents, this latest study has confirmed much of what we speculated about the critical role of the team and their states for facilitating effective incident management.

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