

make sure everything is going well. It is also the responsibility of the Sailors doing the work to let the supervisor know of more discrepancies.

With the steps in place, we can apply the principles to have some control over the outcome. The goal in this case would be a working and safe electrical panel. The risk would be minimal, because we have taken enough precautions to reduce the chance and severity of electrical shock.

Unless we're unable to find the proper tools, equipment or knowledgeable people, there will be no unnecessary risk. Without the right people and tools to do the job, we would have to use our best judgment to determine whether the risk is worth the outcome. In this case, death by electrocution is not worth the benefit of checking a panel. Immediately inform a supervisor.

A good way to apply the principles is to document the problem and write down how you use ORM to fix it. Making sure there is a subject-matter expert present is part of making decisions at the right level, because they can let you know who needs to know, and when to notify the proper people.

Today, the Navy has some of the smartest and most dedicated Sailors I ever have had the privilege of knowing. However, it is critical for all personnel to have the tools necessary to take advantage of this decision-making process that will ensure a safe and successful mission.

Safety is everyone's business. If it doesn't look right or feel right, it probably isn't. Stop what you're doing and "ask the Chief." Stay safe—the Navy needs every Warrior.

By FLTCM(SS/SW) R. D. West
U.S. Pacific Fleet Master Chief

About Those Principles

Recent ORM assessments suggest that the practice of ORM is not fully realized. This stumbling block is not due to a lack of understanding the steps. Missing in the way we teach, learn, and use ORM are the founding principles, which provide context to the five-step process.

Accept risk when benefit is greater than risk involved. The first principle asks us to make a comparison between operational necessity and level of risk. Does the benefit of conducting the operation outweigh the risk associated with the hazard? This comparison suggests an on-going assessment between benefit and risk throughout the event or activity. In practice, Step 3 ("Make risk decisions") turns into a yes/no, go/no-go, decision based on the loss and not necessarily based on the loss as applied to the operation. In theory, "making risk decisions" implies an understanding that the loss has an outcome that affects operations and readiness.

Accept no unnecessary risk. If the benefit doesn't outweigh the risk, does the operation continue? While the five steps should identify and assess the risk associated with hazards, risk-managers may not clearly understand the extent of their responsibility within the risk-management process. A strong organizational culture is required to empower personnel to stop, or pause an operation based on the identified hazard. The concept of "unnecessary" is a moving scale based on operational conditions. The risk-manager must have a strong understanding of this principle in order to make sound risk decisions.

Anticipate and manage risk by planning. Planning has always been a critical step in the process of understanding the operational environment, operating conditions, and capabilities. However, risk-managers sometimes misunderstand this principle. Milestones for events and operations, and critical risk-decision points, must be an embedded step in the planning process. We must identify levels of risk acceptance, and standardize how we communicate and elevate risk decisions. Applying this principle leads one to continue to identify, assess, and modify throughout the operation.

Make risk decisions at the right level. This principle also centers on step 3, which cannot stand alone in an ORM checklist. Is the operator in a position of authority to apply step 3 without further oversight? Applying this principle requires that the unit (and all those who supervise risk within the unit) understand when risk-decision thresholds have been exceeded. In practice, standardizing risk-decision thresholds becomes cumbersome due to the open-ended nature of risk management. However, command climate and an active risk-management program can go a long way to provide risk-managers with the necessary guidance.

The five-steps of ORM do not complete the risk-management process. The four principles provide the foundation for a strong risk-management program. They provide context and help the risk-manager apply the five steps more effectively. ■

By Cdr. Douglas Hamilton
Naval Test Wing Atlantic Aviation Safety