

## Governing Energy



### Leadership 101?

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After reviewing the Department of the Navy, Report on the Collision between USS FITZGERALD (DDG 62) and Motor Vessel ACX CRYSTAL, this writer was disappointed by the nature of the findings.<sup>i</sup> According to this report, leadership failures include:

- *Failure to plan for safety*
- *Failure to adhere to sound navigation practice*
- *Failure to execute basic watch standing practices*
- *Failure to properly use available navigation tools*
- *Failure to respond deliberately and effectively when in extremis*

Not surprisingly, certain crew members failed in these areas as well. This incident resulted in loss of life and the loss of careers by several senior Admirals, the Captain of the USS Fitzgerald and other junior officers.

Moreover, this was not the only incident during this period, a couple of months later the USS JOHN S MCCAIN collided with another merchant vessel, again resulting in loss of life. Once more, poor watch standing practice was apparently one of the contributing factors. Lack of *situational awareness* during critical periods was also cited as casual by the report for both incidents.

As we all know a Culture of Safety starts at the top! From this writer's perspective, one of the most disappointing statements from the report on the Fitzgerald is what can only be seen as a failure of leadership.

*"The command leadership did not foster a culture of critical self-assessment. Following a near-collision in mid-May, leadership made no effort to determine the root causes and take corrective actions in order to improve the ship's performance."*

Other casual issues are said to include, long deployments, fatigue, lack of training, lack of funding, stress, high workload and failure to follow COLREGS; International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea. Most observers of the energy sector can relate to these same issues in our current '**Do More With Less**' Culture.

Society should learn from each major incident of this nature. The similarities between military operations and oil and gas field operations are many. Hence the reason the industry hires veterans and seeks counsel from the Coast Guard and US Navy.

Take these lessons learned from our fellow mariners and let's not have any more incidents resulting in loss of life and premature executive retirements. By all accounts these accidents were preventable and at least partially caused by human error.

Operational Excellence practices and enabling technology exist that mitigate the risk of this happening again. Use them!

## **Does Your Organization Actually Adhere to its Stated Safety Culture?**

For more on this subject, see [Structural Dynamics:Foundation of Next Generation Management Science](#)

Additional details are available from the author.

### **About the Author**

Dr. [Scott M. Shemwell](#) has over 30 years technical and executive management experience primarily in the energy sector. He is the author of six books and has written extensively about the field of operations. Shemwell is the Managing Director of The Rapid Response Institute, a firm that focuses on providing its customers with solutions enabling Operational Excellence and regulatory compliance management. He has studied cultural interactions for more than 30 years—his dissertation; *Cross Cultural Negotiations*

*Between Japanese and American Businessmen: A Systems Analysis (Exploratory Study)* is an early peer reviewed manuscript addressing the systemic structure of societal relationships.

## End Notes

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<sup>i</sup> <http://s3.amazonaws.com/CHINFO/USS+Fitzgerald+and+USS+John+S+McCain+Collision+Reports.pdf>