

Take 5 – Hero or Villain

Humphries, E¹ and Hassall, M²

1. Manager, Education and Training, Minerals Industry Safety and Health Centre, Sustainable Minerals Institute, University of Queensland, St Lucia Qld 4109. Email: e.humphries@uq.edu.au
2. Director Minerals Industry Safety and Health Centre, Sustainable Minerals Institute, University of Queensland, St Lucia Qld 4109. Email: m.hassall1@uq.edu.au

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ABSTRACT

The concept of a “Personal Risk Assessment” commonly called a Take 5 or SLAM (Stop, Look, Assess, Manage) have been in place in high hazard industries for several decades. However, around 30 years later there is minimal published scientific research aimed at understanding if this personal risk assessment process adds value to the health and safety of workers by preventing events from occurring or minimising the consequences if an event was to occur.

Over the past 12 months I have been conducting risk and safety focused training across many mining organisations from QLD to Tasmania. During the training courses there are numerous opportunities to discuss and trial the application of lead thinking to company scenarios and challenges including how they relate to:

- Hazard management from all levels of an organisation,
- The maturity of the health and safety culture of an organisation, and
- The experience and competency of the workers involved.

From these discussions and exercises I have derived insights about the application of the personal risk assessment process. These include:

- That the personal risk assessment process can focus on acute safety hazards with little or no consideration of more chronic health hazards and psychosocial hazards,
- Limited or no integration between the personal risk assessment process and other more formal risk assessment and critical control verification processes,
- How the personal risk assessment can be misused in investigations, and
- How the use of standard forms can cripple the effectiveness of the intent of the process.

These insights raise a number of questions about what the most effective way is to use the Take 5 process. However, as mentioned there is a scarcity of scientific research to provide a valid evidence-based answer to this question. So, in this presentation I will present options for industry to consider when reflecting on the application of a personal risk assessment process.