# Influence of groupthink in safety decision making in major hazard industries

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**Abstract**

This paper examines the impact of "group-think" on safety decision-making within major hazard industries, emphasising how the pursuit of consensus and conformity can undermine effective risk management. Key factors contributing to this phenomenon—such as operational systems, incentive structures, and everyday management practices—are analysed, highlighting how these elements can foster environments prone to poor decision making and even deceit fuelled by groupthink.

Once groupthink becomes embedded in an organisation's culture, it becomes increasingly difficult to identify, address, and correct these behaviours. The paper further explores how dishonesty can become normalized within such cultures, where collective justifications may enable unethical practices when safety decisions are challenged. Groupthink also exacerbates these issues by suppressing dissenting opinions, leading to inadequate evaluation of both current and emerging risks.

The pressure to conform stifles open dialogue on safety concerns and disregard for personal opinions, ultimately compromising the integrity of the decision-making process. To mitigate these risks, the paper calls for a cultural shift within organisations, prioritising accident prevention, transparency, and resilience in decision-making, supported by robust governance. Promoting a "just" culture—where accountability is encouraged without fear of reprisal—is essential for fostering a safety-conscious environment in high-risk industries. Addressing these challenges will enhance safety outcomes and cultivate a culture of integrity and vigilance.