

# MAFES Dawg Tracks



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*Hurry, Haste is Hazardous*



How many times have we heard the following statements after an accident or incident? “Well he or she just got in too big of a hurry,” or “he or she got in a hurry and got careless.” A common implication is made that if the party had not been working at a more rapid pace, the incident or accident may not have happened. This is very well the case; but other things come to light in this type of situation. There are other facets that can result in accident or incident causes as well.

There are two other factors that come to light when we are discussing accidents or incidents from hurrying. Risk perception and decision-making come to light as two major factors that can influence accidents or incidents. The stress of being in a hurry can affect both of these factors.

Risk perception refers back to an individual’s judgment on the possibilities of an accident actually happening when we are involved in a particular act or behavior. Let’s look at “bungee jumping.” I know folks that have jumped from bridges or platforms that are 250 to 300 ft in the air and see no danger or risk, but for me personally that is like taking a chance with your life. I rate “bungee jumping” as suicidal and at the highest risk. On the other end of the pendulum, I see no risk involved in getting into a boat at 4:30 am in the morning in sub-zero weather and running the river in the dark for 15 or 20 minutes to reach a duck blind. Others may see this scenario as highly dangerous and risky.

Look at the farmer who uses a piece of equipment for so long that he begins to feel that the equipment is safer now than when he first bought it. The experience that the farmer has gained over years of operating the equipment leads him to believe this theory. However, this isn’t totally true, because this rote or repetitious use of the equipment has put him into the mode that an accident or incident can’t happen because of his extended use and familiarity of the equipment. Besides the risk of danger through the extended knowledge he has gained, his maintenance of the equipment can play an important factor in the safe use as well.

The farmer’s perception of risk is lower, but the actual situation is more dangerous. As stated earlier, the risk can be even greater if he puts himself into a situation where he is rushing to complete a job because of the time element, or maybe the situation of weather conditions causes him to get into a rush.

Decision-making refers to the processes or strategies that one uses in arriving at solutions for a problem. Normally, alternatives to possible problems are not organized very well and have no systematic approach to the solutions. These decisions can be “by the seat of the pants,” with no pros and cons for alternatives to possible problems. Let’s refer back to the farmer and his long-term knowledge of this piece of equipment that we used in the example above. Look at a situation where he may be working hard to finish a field and the equipment is beginning to experience a problem. He continues on to complete the field. If you asked him later why he didn’t stop and correct the mechanical problem or call for help, he will problem tell you that neither of these was considered. His only thought was to complete the field.

There may not have been any long-term consequences involved in this scenario, but just think that there have been some incidents similar to this where an injury or disability could have resulted. He didn’t explore the alternatives or the possibilities that could have happened if there had been an accident or incident. The delay resulting from the shut down for repairing the problem could have very easily been much shorter and less expensive than that possibility of a serious mechanical problem resulting in personal injury and extensive repair costs to the equipment.

Many schools of thought on this subject will impart opinions that risks are part of being in the farming industry and “making haste” is an integral part of the culture. Both of these statements are true, but it is necessary to have a knowledge of how risk perception and decision making under stress can influence our thoughts and behaviors. The fact that knowing that many farming situations are more dangerous than we perceive them to be can be useful. It will allow the farmer in this case to be able to react, in case the unexpected does happen. This knowledge, if he uses it correctly and remains cognizant can be very advantageous to him in that he can mentally review the possible dangers involved and take precautions to help reduce the possibilities of the unexpected happening.

This knowledge of the operation and proper maintenance of the equipment or the knowledge of dangers involved to human life and/or the proper function of the equipment can give him the confidence to make those rational decisions to reduce or eliminate the chances of incidents or accidents.

***THE SAFEST RISK IS THE ONE  
YOU DIDN’T TAKE!***

***THE CHANCE TAKER IS THE  
ACCIDENT MAKER!***

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