

EMS and the Zero Fail Mission

The Path To Improving Safety Performance

Chapter 6

Zero Fail Mission- Predictable and Preventable

"It is achievable. We want to stop people dying at an early age, prematurely and painfully, from a preventable condition."- Dr Robert Beaglehole



I've already said the Columbia tragedy was not an accident. Neither were the events of 911. Both of these events were predictable and the outcomes preventable. Think about it- NASA knew there was a problem and their internal policy prohibited flights. Predicting this event was a snap, as was prevention. Think about it, **the Challenger shuttle did not have to explode and kill all seven on board.**

Prior to September 11, 2001, multiple government agencies knew that terrorist cells were living and planning in the U.S. We had been warned. The New York World Trade center had previously been a target. The U.S. was not the victim of an accident, rather complacency and a lack of communication between intelligence agencies⁴. Note the reference to a

failure in communication as a cause. **Over 2,900 people died on September 11, 2001 from known hazards. September 11th was no accident; people caused these events. These deaths need not have happened.**

The attack was predictable and the outcome preventable. The same is true about the levees that failed in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina. Katrina may have been an act of God but the failure of the levees was man made and was predictable and the subsequent disaster, preventable.

In the context of **EMS losses, collisions, employee injuries and harmful patient events are predictable and preventable events.** We know, and in fact have known for decades that most serious EMS collisions occur at intersections. Yet we continue to take red lights without stopping and many agencies don't actively pursue eliminating this behavior. Unless the result is injury or death there is often zero accountability. In a previous chapter we said that basing enforcement on outcome is a dangerous practice.