

## Safety Corner

### Application of criminology theories in safety management

There are similarities between three popular criminology theories and common practices in safety management.

The “**broken windows theory**” suggests that if broken are not repaired promptly, vandals are likely to break more windows and commit more serious crimes in the neighbourhood. This theory is based on the belief that better monitoring and maintaining order in urban environments may reduce petty crimes and prevent an escalation of petty crimes into more serious crimes. Critics of the theory argue that extrapolating order in an environment to prevention of serious crime does not match with statistics. Like the broken window theory, the 5-S approach in safety management submits that an orderly workplace can boost the morale of workers, encourage a sense of pride and promote ownership of responsibilities; and by doing so, enhance the safety culture can and reduce the accident rate.

**Zero tolerance** is a policy that prescribes automatic punishment for infractions of a stated rule with the intention of eliminating undesirable conduct such as drunk-driving and possession of narcotics. Strictly applied, a zero-tolerance policy forbids authorities from exercising discretion or changing punishments; instead, a pre-determined punishment is imposed regardless of the circumstances. Opponents of zero tolerance believe that the policy can lead to unreasonably harsh penalties, under-reporting of incidents, and neglect investigation on a case-by-case basis. In safety management, expelling workers from a workplace when they are caught smoking or performing an unsafe act is an example of applying zero-tolerance policy.

**Community policing** is a philosophy that promotes collaborative partnerships between law enforcement agencies and the individuals and organizations in the community they serve, to increase trust through defined accountability, openness, community cooperation, and proactive identification of problems and development of solutions. A similar organizational strategy in safety management is the application of stakeholder management to systematically identify stakeholders’ objectives and risk factors so that safety conditions can be enhanced through collaborative and beneficial efforts. The stakeholders concerned may include business partners, regulators, shareholders, customers, staff, members of the public media as well as competitors.

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