

## Safety Corner

What does a rhino have to do with safety and health?

A 'black swan event' is an event that is a surprise to the observer, has a major impact, and is believed to be impossible to occur. The importance of the metaphor lies in its analogy to the fragility of any system of thought. After the first recorded instance of the event, it is rationalised by hindsight, as if it could have been expected; that is, the relevant data were available but unaccounted for in risk mitigation programmes. Black swan events are typically ignored due to the perception of the low probability of occurrence.

As mentioned in the last issue of the Safety Corner, 'elephant in the room' is used to describe certain unsafe acts that workers just accept as-is without discussing them or challenging them. The 'elephant in the room' is a familiar expression of a hazard that everyone is familiar with but has stopped noticing and accepts as normal. It also refers to any obvious problem or risk no one wants to discuss, or a condition of group-think no one wants to challenge. -

What is a 'grey rhino'? As a cousin to the 'black swan event' and 'elephant in the room event', a 'grey rhino event' refers to those highly probable, high-impact yet neglected threat or hazards. An example of a grey rhino event is Deepwater Horizon. They are not random surprises, but occur after a series of warnings and visible evidence. Grey rhino events are typically ignored due to ignorance of their importance, with management failing to address obvious dangers before they spiral out of control. You do not want to wait until the grey rhino is charging at you before you take action.

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