



Measure for Measure



by Ir. Shum Keng Yan

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Behaviour is not really Shakespearean but behaviour can be measured! Or can it? In this series, we will start by looking at some fundamentals

of behavioural safety measures and how these will become increasingly less reliable.

“What can be observed can be measured!” That was the premise when safety professionals were first inducted into measuring behaviour. Let us take the idea and put it into a simplified situation.

SCENARIO

Imagine that you have set up a camera at a traffic junction on a quiet street without telling anyone. How often do you think someone will drive through a red light on a quiet street? The most cliché answer is: “it depends”.

You begin to count.... 1, 2, 3, and it all adds up – either safe (people who observe the red light) or unsafe (people who go through the red light).

Each time a person decides to drive past a red light is an unsafe behaviour. So by observing and counting safe and unsafe behaviours over a certain period will give a picture of how “safe” the collective behaviour of the people in the area is. Sounds simple enough.

Let us assume the unsafe behaviour continues.... there really is very little chance of an accident since the person will glance left and right before driving through, the street is quiet, the oncoming traffic is cautious and so on. Thus, unsafe behaviours can continue for a long time without any consequence.

Then one day, a combination of inattentiveness, speed and so on, brings about an incident that may be minor or serious. Sounds familiar? The level of compliance is brought about by the perceived Consequence (recall Significance, Timing and Consistency – December 2017 – August 2018 Safe Tea Time).

So the next cliché is: “What can be measured can be improved”! Is behaviour so mathematical that by measuring behaviour, we can set targets that will lead to improved safety performance? More of this in the next article.

For good measure, you are invited to weigh in at: pub@iem.org.my. ■

“Condemn the fault,
and not the actor of it.”

(Angelo, Act II, Scene II), Measure For Measure, William Shakespeare