WHY RISK FEELS DIFFERENT

Workplace vs. Life:
Why the Same Risk Can Feel Different

BREAKOUT SESSION

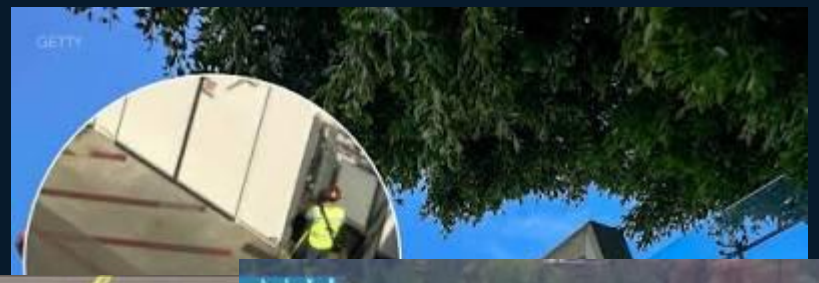
Joint Technical Symposium 2026

October 22, 2026 | Carson, California

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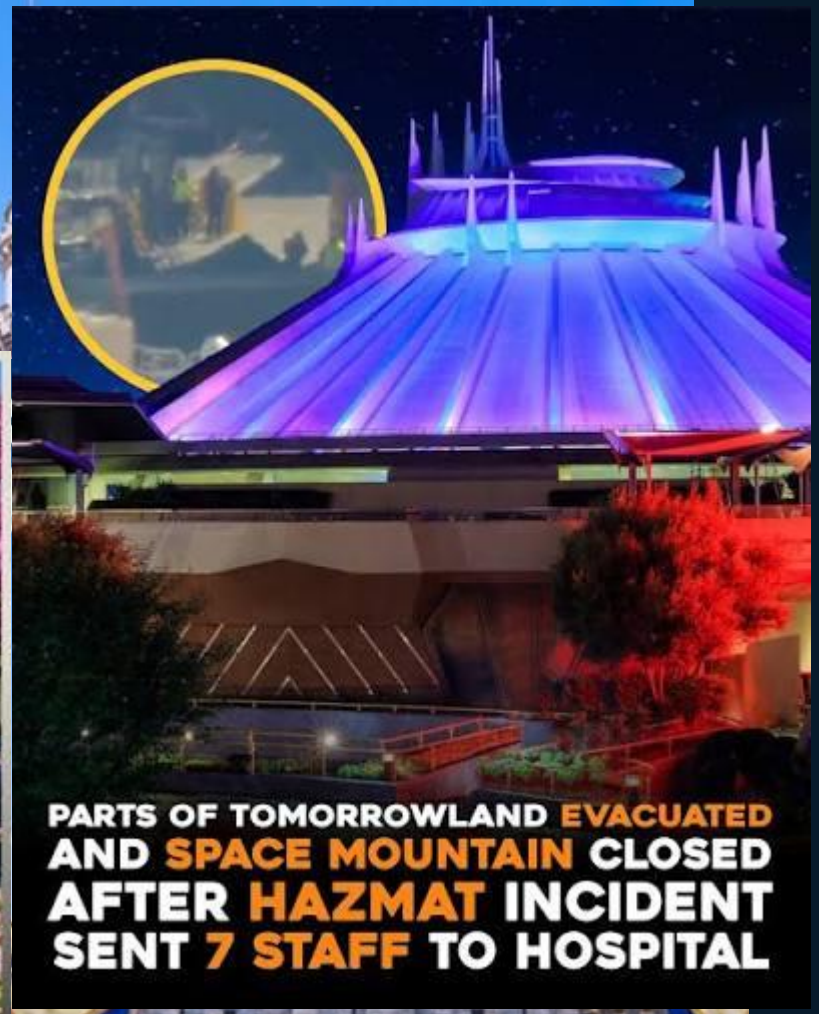





BREAKING NEW
5 Disneyla
members
after hazn

FOX
ConservativeTwins
BREAKING ALERT: HAZM
SCENE AT DISNEYLAND A
MYSTERY ODOR HITS BACK
NEAR STAR TOURS!
Authorities swarm as five cast
rushed to hospital—source und
Officials: "An unknown odo
detected backstage near
Tomorrowland attraction Star
Adventures Continue."


NATIONAL NEWS
wfla.com
7 DISNEYLAND EMPLOYEES TAKEN TO HOSPITAL AFTER HAZMAT INCIDENT


PARTS OF TOMORROWLAND EVACUATED
AND SPACE MOUNTAIN CLOSED
AFTER HAZMAT INCIDENT
SENT 7 STAFF TO HOSPITAL


Disneyland hazmat situation sends 4 cast members to the hospital

Same Person. Different Setting. Different Risk Response.

THE QUESTION

Why can a workplace exposure feel unacceptable, while driving, climbing or home projects feel routine?

THE REFRAME

Ask what changed:

Choice

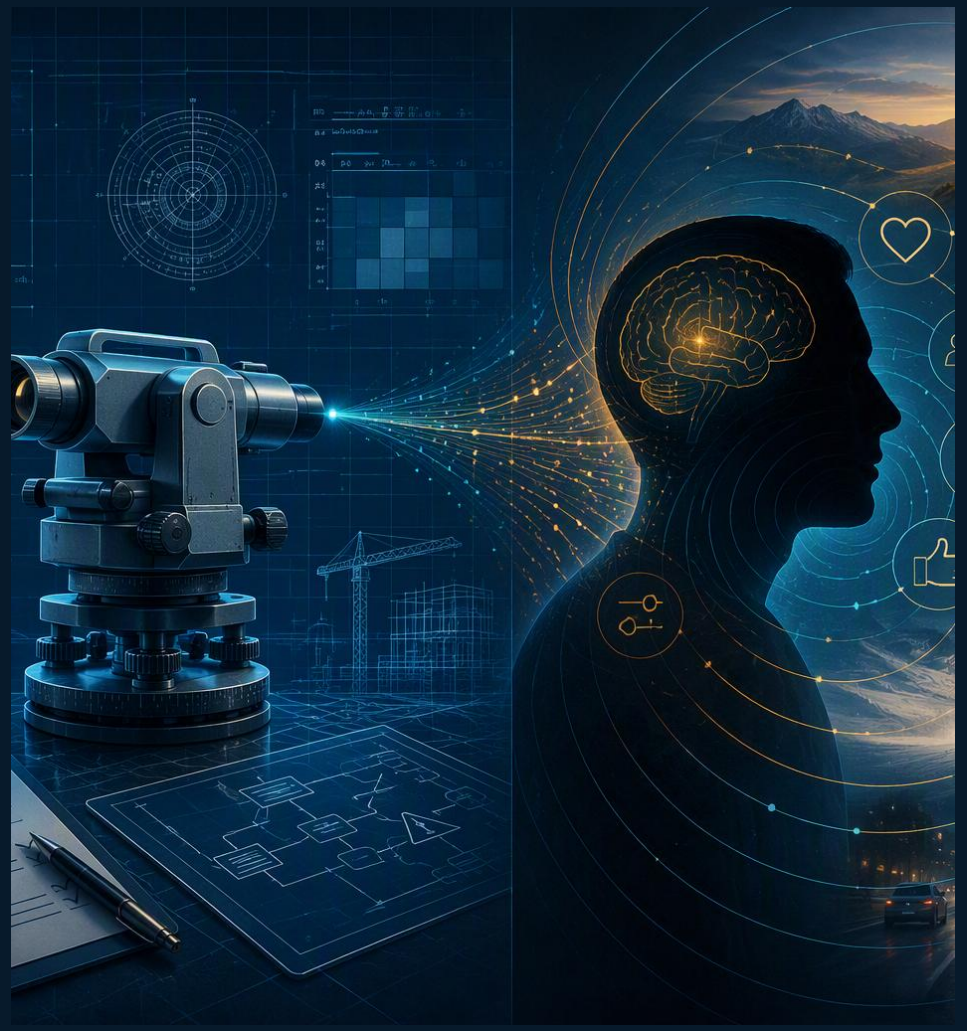
Control

Familiarity

Benefit

Trust

Risk is Measured. Risk Perception is Experienced.



WHAT THE ASSESSMENT MEASURES

How likely?

How severe?

How often exposed?

WHAT THE PERSON EXPERIENCES

What could happen?

Can I influence it?

Do I trust the controls?

Use both views: verify the risk and make the controls understandable.

Six Questions That Explain Why Risk Feels Different

CHOICE

Was this my choice?

CONTROL

Can I influence what happens?

FAMILIARITY

Does this feel familiar?

BENEFIT

What is the benefit to me?

TRUST

Do I trust the people and controls?

FAIRNESS

Who carries the risk, and who benefits?

Chosen Risk Often Feels Different from Assigned Risk



PERSONAL / VOLUNTARY

I chose it • I see the benefit • I know it • I feel in control

WORKPLACE / ASSIGNED

It is assigned • Control is shared • Controls may be unseen • The employer must protect

Facts Shape Decisions. Feelings Shape Reactions.



ANALYTICAL RESPONSE

Likelihood
Consequence
Trade-offs

EMOTIONAL RESPONSE

Fear
Dread
A vivid image

UNKNOWN + UNSEEN + NOT MY CHOICE

Concern can rise before the exposure is fully understood.

“A loud, unfamiliar noise in your home at night can trigger concern before you know whether it is an intruder, the air conditioner, or something falling off a shelf.”

Four Mental Shortcuts That Can Skew Risk Judgment

ANCHORING

The first label sticks and shapes what follows.

OPTIMISM BIAS

“It probably will not happen to me.”

NORMALIZATION

“We have done it this way before, so it must be safe.”

AVAILABILITY

Recent or vivid events feel more likely.

A Stronger Control Can Change Behavior Too

THE CONTROL FEELS PROTECTIVE

The situation feels safer.

PEOPLE ADAPT

Speed, attention or exposure may change.

CHECK THE WHOLE SYSTEM

Keep the control strong and watch for unintended changes.

“Make it easy for our Cast Members to do the right thing, and hard for them to do the wrong thing.”

THOMAS MAZLOUM | CHAIRMAN, DISNEY EXPERIENCES

One Hazard. Two Very Different Experiences.

LIFE / VOLUNTARY

I chose it

I feel in control

The benefit is clear

It feels familiar

I trust my own skill

WORK / ASSIGNED

It may be assigned

Control is shared

The benefit may feel distant

It may be unfamiliar

Trust depends on the system

Familiar Risks Can Become Easy to Overlook

DRIVING

39,254

Traffic Fatalities | 2024

WORK

5,070

Fatal Work Injuries | 2024

HOME PROJECT TOOLS

218,310

Estimated Injuries | 2023

BIKE RIDING

422,500

Estimated ER Visits | 2023

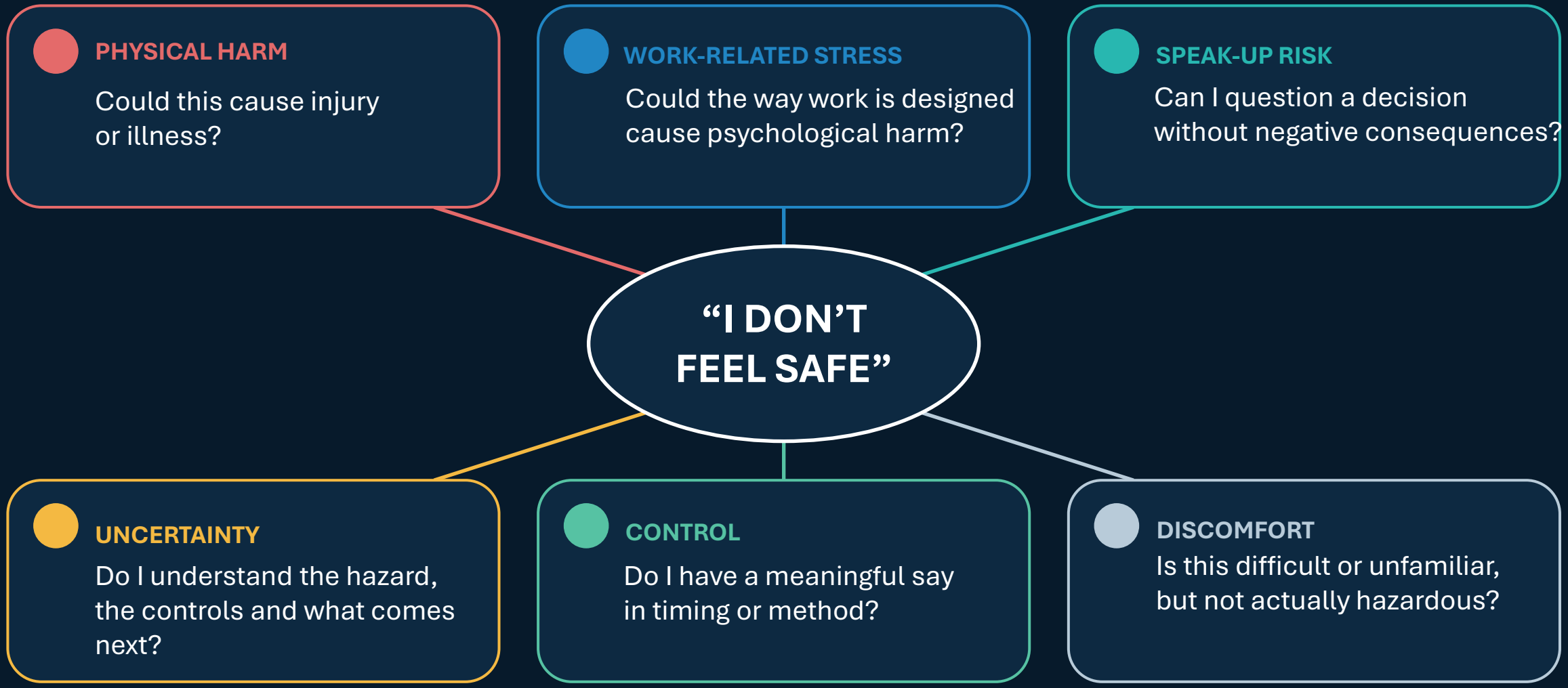
PICKLEBALL TREND

8,894 (2020) › 16,997 (2022) › 24,461 (2023)

THE POINT

Familiar and voluntary still does not mean risk-free.

“I Don’t Feel Safe” Is the Start of the Conversation



Traditional Safety is Changing





ISO 45003: Manage Psychosocial Risk Through the Safety System

INTEGRATE

- Anything at work that could cause psychological harm
- Examples: high demands, low control, poor support, or unclear roles

HOW HARM CAN BUILD

- Stress can cause harm when it is frequent, prolonged, or severe
- Hazards can interact and increase the risk

WHAT LEADERS DO

- Look at the full work system
- Eliminate the risk where possible; otherwise, minimize it and check the controls

ISO 45003

Australia Treats Psychological Health Like Other Workplace Risks

SAFE WORK AUSTRALIA

Creates national model policy and guidance. States and territories enforce their own laws.

MODEL WHS LAWS

Defines psychosocial hazards and requires employers to manage the risk.

CODE OF PRACTICE

Shows how to identify, assess, control, consult and review.



Australia’s Psychosocial Rules: Progress or Compliance Burden?

The same reform is being praised for elevating prevention and criticized for complexity and paperwork.

POSITIVE VIEW

“This is a profound shift. It moves psychological safety out of the realm of ‘good leadership’ and firmly into governance, compliance, and accountability.”

D’Neale Prosser | Human Resources Director | June 30, 2026

CRITICAL VIEW

“The legislative changes are likely to fail to improve workers’ mental health because at least one of those psychosocial factors is too confronting and uncomfortable to employers.”

Kevin Jones | SafetyAtWorkBlog | March 12, 2025

THE LEADERSHIP TEST: Turn the regulation into better work design and verified controls, not a larger risk register.

Psychosocial Hazards Are Workplace Risks

WHAT THEY ARE

- Anything at work that could cause psychological harm
- Examples: high demands, low control, poor support, or unclear roles

HOW HARM CAN BUILD

- Stress can cause harm when it is frequent, prolonged, or severe
- Hazards can interact and increase the risk

WHAT LEADERS DO

- Look at the full work system
- Eliminate the risk where possible; otherwise, minimize it and check the controls

Use the Same Safety Cycle for Psychosocial Risk



1 IDENTIFY

Find what in the work could cause harm.

2 ASSESS

Look at how often, how long and how severe.

3 CONTROL

Remove or reduce the source of risk.

4 CONSULT

Design solutions with the people doing the work.

5 REVIEW

Check that the solution still works as conditions change.

Every Concern Needs Two Conversations



THE RISK CONVERSATION

- What is the exposure?
- What could happen?
- Which controls matter most?
- How will we verify them?

THE TRUST CONVERSATION

- What is still unknown?
- What information is missing?
- What would build confidence?
- How can people participate?



1 LISTEN

Thank them and hear the concern.

2 DEFINE

Clarify what “unsafe” means here.

3 ASSESS

Evaluate the credible exposure.

4 VERIFY

Confirm the controls work in the field.

5 CLOSE

Explain the decision and follow through.

General Duty Clause

(a) Each employer

(1) should make a reasonable effort to provide employees with a workplace that is mostly free from recognized hazards, provided the corrective action is not too expensive, operationally inconvenient, or scheduled during peak production.

(2) should become generally familiar with applicable occupational safety and health standards, preferably before an inspection, but immediately afterward is also acceptable.

(a) Each employer –

(1) shall furnish to each of his employees employment and a place of employment which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to his employees;

(2) shall comply with occupational safety and health standards promulgated under this Act.

THREE IDEAS TO TAKE WITH YOU

01 **Risk acceptance depends on context.**

Choice, control, familiarity, benefit, trust and fairness change how risk feels.

02 **“I feel unsafe” is a signal to clarify.**

Find out whether the issue is exposure, work-related stress, speak-up risk, uncertainty or discomfort.

03 **Lead with evidence and empathy.**

Listen, define, assess, verify and close the loop.



Courage to Address Risk.

Care to Acknowledge Concerns.

Accountability to Ensure Protection for All.

THANK YOU

Questions & Discussion

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APPENDIX

Selected Reading

CAMPBELL INSTITUTE
Risk Perception: Theories, Strategies, and Next Steps

SLOVIC (1987)
Perception of Risk

STARR (1969)
Social Benefit versus Technological Risk

LOEWENSTEIN ET AL. (2001)
Risk as Feelings

PRIOLO ET AL. (2025)
Risk perception and safety behaviors in high-risk workers

QIU ET AL. (2024)
Anchoring effects in workers' assessment of unsafe behavior

MAN ET AL. (2022)
Optimism bias, safety climate and construction risk-taking

SAFE WORK AUSTRALIA
Psychosocial hazards and WHS duties