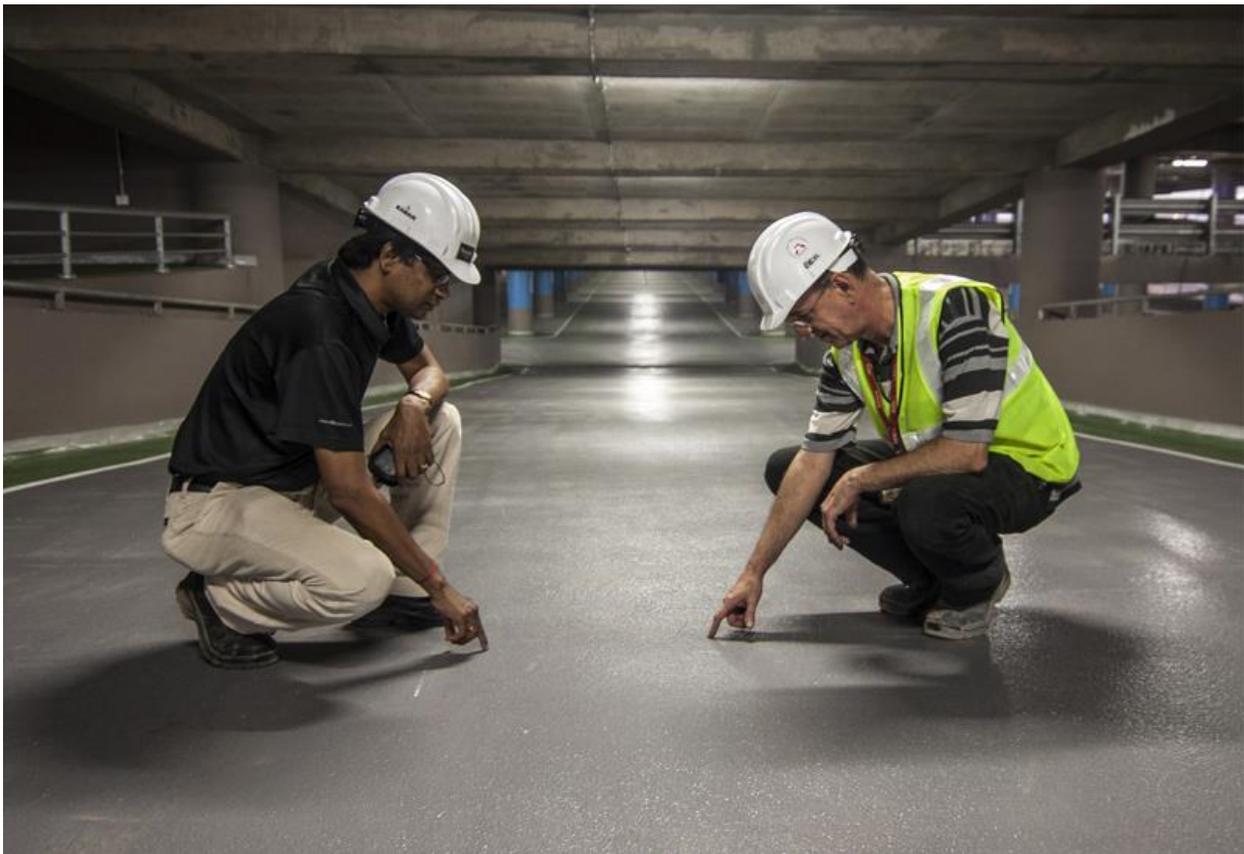


# Construction Week

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**Hill Int'l:** Making the right choice, at the right time and for the right reason

**Hill International's** William Mueller discusses how the firm prepared an effective risk assessment to ensure the safety of its employees this year



**Hill International** reflects on how they overcame the COVID-19 pandemic [representational]

by Guest comment

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**If safety professionals could work themselves out of a job, mentoring employees on life preservation could probably not be a more purposeful endeavour.**

The process can be as simple as adopting a structured approach that calls for the application of common sense, knowledge and self-discipline at the right time, with the right choice and for the right reason.

Safety professionals as well as experienced project and construction managers will surely conclude it is easier said than done. They will, however, all likely agree on such an endeavours requiring a structured approach for a successful and sustainable practice.

Most of us are introduced to structured approaches through a parent, guardian, teacher, coach or clergy. As we transition into adulthood, we add managers, siblings and trusted friends to that list.

Any structured approach should evolve around the preservation of life. Sadly, for the whole of humanity there probably has been no greater instance of a structured approach in modern times than the onset and response to the global pandemic.

This structured approach began with mankind's dependence on the scientific community to initially assess the risk while simultaneously initiating research toward the development of a vaccine. Humanity witnessed a secondary risk assessment process commonly referred to as 'mechanism for change' (MOC) that represents a change to initial mitigation when more becomes known about the risk.

### **Minimise risk during COVID-19**

The pandemic provides us with an ominous reminder that risk can be minimised, yet it cannot be entirely eliminated.

As the scientific community navigates through the challenges of a vaccine development, mankind must attempt toward perfecting self-discipline needed to preserve life.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, **Hill** prepared specific plans in response.

The first was a Pandemic Emergency Preparedness and Business Continuity Plan assigning responsibilities for executives and senior management to proactively manage business operations.

Additionally, two separate Pandemic Mitigation Plans were prepared. One represented US operations and the other international operations. These plans established roles and responsibilities for Hill's line managers and employees, besides providing proactive guidance on optimising daily wellness within the workplace in accordance with national health agencies and ministries.

### **Applying structured approach**

When it comes to applying a structured approach toward risk assessment in the workplace, the process is similar, however many supervisors and workers alike simply cannot find the time to practice despite having internal procedures. Not only are they putting themselves and their employer in a state of non-compliance, but more importantly they have denied themselves the opportunity to identify, discuss, comprehend and mitigate recognised hazards. These discoveries arise during field audits and are symptomatic of deficiencies within project and field management teams.

A highly effective structured approach toward risk assessment is one applied for, registered, created and archived electronically. To effectively achieve this will require a structured approach.

Working together with the information technology (IT) team, an initial request to construct an internal channel accessible to all employees needs to be explored. The channel would operate sequentially upon input by the requesting employee and utilise the organisation's standard job or task hazard assessment tool.

### **Repository approach**

An employee request would facilitate the completion of a standardised electronic form that calls for the employee entering his/her name, the name of their supervisor, the project name and the project number. Once this information is submitted, it automatically creates a repository and opens access to the organisation's hazard assessment tool template together with a job aid on how to complete the process.

The hazard assessment template and job aid can be completed online or downloaded for offline completion. It is highly encouraged that the supervisor and all employee(s) involved in the task complete the hazard assessment together.

Once the online/offline hazard assessment is completed, it is uploaded by the employee back into the repository. By completing this step, the employee submits the hazard assessment for review and acceptance with the supervisor and the organisation's safety professional receiving electronic notification.

The process will initially require the organisation's safety professional be responsible to review and accept the submitted hazard assessment. During the review process the safety professional may reach out to the employee or supervisor or both.

Once all changes are made, documents will be available in the repository coded as accepted. In time, supervisors would ultimately become responsible for the review and acceptance process using the safety professional for guidance on an as needed basis.

Once accepted, the employee or supervisor will print the document and review it with the assigned employees participating in the project. The document provides a location where all attending participants can sign the form as proof of acknowledgement. Also, the supervisor will upload a copy of the signed document into the designated repository and maintain the original signed copy on project being available for review upon request.

Any new hazards arising on the initial assessment form constitutes a mechanism of change which activates the identical risk assessment process.

While auditing projects, safety professionals and/or any member of the upper management team should request a review of the signed document.

Compliance for the hazard assessment process should ultimately become a performance review metric for employees, supervisors, and members of the project management team. This process will make outreach possible, easy and accessible, reiterating that every choice matters, and in the end the structured approach towards safety has its own benefits and merits.