

*Abstract*

## **ANALYSING THE SAFETY CULTURE OF CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES**

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**I**N this research project the safety cultures of two different construction companies in The Netherlands are compared. One company is specialized in constructing utility buildings and the other is specialized in civil-technical constructions. For this purpose a specific research approach was developed in order to relate safety performances to basic principles that are inherent to each of the companies. Safety culture is a concept that is related to the science of safety. This relatively young science arose from the need to assess the risk of complex technologies to human beings. Safety culture is a guiding element behind safety. This phenomenon of culture in relation to safety on site is a new field of research and this demands a more holistic approach.

In this project an ethnographic research method is applied, similar to methods for research concerning organization culture. The principle of 'thick description' is used. Interviews, observation and document analysis give an overview of what occurs in each case. Afterwards, these observations are screened with the opinions of members of the organisation.

This project lasted for a period of more than one year. The results that came out of this 'in company research' and also the experience with the developed method for research contribute to the field of the science of safety. Both companies have basic principles that emphasise pragmatism. Neither company evaluates the past. The present and near future are more important. Differences can be observed in how both companies deal with responsibility.

From the basic assumptions, practices and descriptions the following four themes are gathered that are important to safety: 'the meaning of working', 'the range of the validity of knowledge', 'the meaning of ability to cope' and 'the focus on time'. The project concludes to a faster research method and give suggestions on how to change the safety culture.

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