

The 5A-Way to Safety

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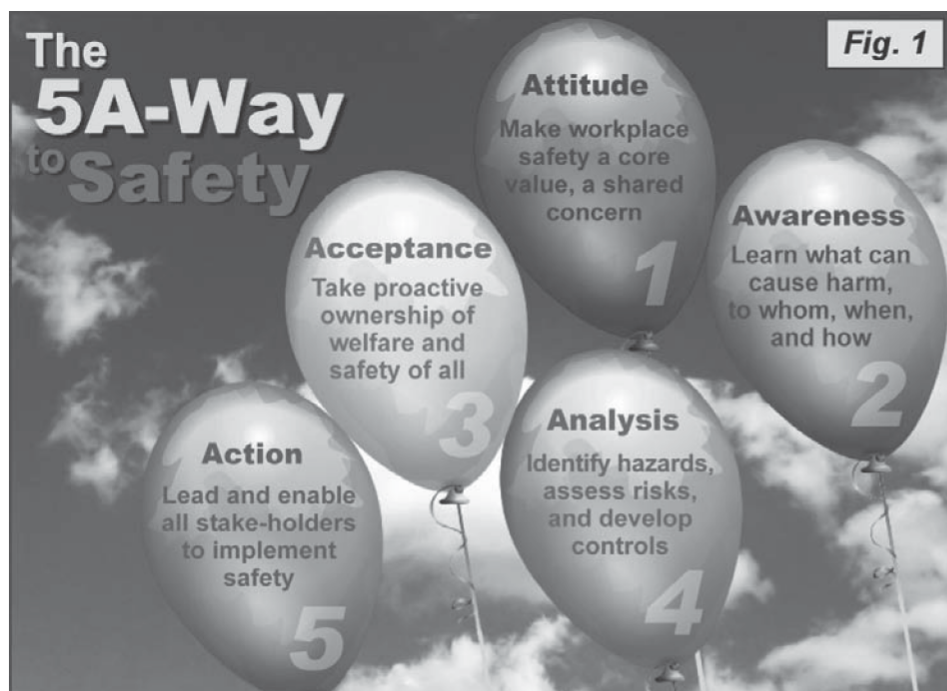


Fig. 1

Over the years the author has developed a five-pronged self-assessment technique for application to complex situations in his professional and personal life.

He recently extended it to address workplace safety, calling it the "5A-Way to Safety".

In coming up with this 5A-Way, the author stands on the shoulders of many all-time greats such as Socrates, Confucius, and Gandhi.

So, he offers this technique now only as a fresh, somewhat different, sequence of classical thought processes in a logical path towards the desirable goal of promoting safety culture in Singapore.

1. Principles of the 5A-Way

Themes of the 5A-Way shown in Fig.1 – graphics courtesy of MOM, based on author's ideas – will be elaborated and illustrated in the following sections.

(A-1) Attitude is to believe in a chosen goal.

- It is the beginning, the foundation for all we want to do.

- In safety, it means that we want every one of the workers who comes to work in the morning, to return home in the evening, safe and sound.
- It means that we wish to share with our cohorts, information and knowledge about accidents and incidents.
- So that we can assure ourselves, and proudly tell others: "I accept work-place safety as a core value!"

(A-2) Awareness is to know what is involved.

- It is knowing what is going on around us.
- In safety, it means we must learn what can cause harm, to whom, with what impact.
- It means that we must see the potential dangers, hear and sense them ... to identify them, so that we can avoid or control them.
- To save employees from injury or death, to save our property from damage, and our environment and reputation from harm.

(A-3) Acceptance is to take responsibility for it.

- It is being pro-active, taking the initiative, leading the way.
- In safety, it means being accountable for the welfare and safety of all the stakeholders.

- It means treating all the stakeholders as partners, and committing ourselves to the actions and their consequences.
- To make risk management our vision and our mission, and to declare their content and our intent to all concerned.

(A-4) Analysis is to plan what to do and how.

- It is developing the right procedures, selecting the right tools.
- In safety, it means identifying the hazards, estimating the likelihood and severity of accidents, and what their combined risk level would be.
- It means deciding which risks are acceptable, which are unacceptable, and thus, which are tolerable.
- So that we can plan to manage them, by elimination or mitigation by means of suitable safeguards.

(A-5) Action is to go ahead and do it!

- It is putting our money and our effort where our mouth is.
- In safety, it means getting all the stakeholders to understand, accept, and participate in the risk assessment and management process.
- It means documenting all information relevant to risk assessment, implementing our decisions, and communicating with all concerned.
- So that we may get on with the business of safety, and the safety of our business ... demonstrating safety first proves that safety lasts.

2. Application to risk management

Management may view risk analysis by the 5A-Way as in Table 1.

3. Application to dengue control

You may have seen the poster in Fig. 2 if you travelled by MRT a few years ago.



Similar publicity may be seen at bus shelters and in our news and other media too. Although fatalities have dropped, this year's worsening Dengue-II statistics make it an urgent necessity to control this hazard. Table 2 applies the 5A-Way to this situation.

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Table 1. The 5A-Way in Risk Management

A1. Attitude	Workers are our family at the workplace. Ensuring their workplace safety is to both their and our benefit.
A2. Awareness	Risk assessment is now a pre-requisite to workplace safety. It is both a legal and a professional requirement.
A3. Acceptance	We accept the responsibility for workplace safety, and declare our commitment to enabling and enforcing it.
A4. Analysis	We get a thorough risk assessment done to identify hazards and assess risks. We determine all necessary controls.
A5. Action	We implement all recommendations of RA team, consistent with our goals. We assist and empower all concerned.

Table 2. The 5A-Way to Dengue Control

A1. Attitude	We must actively participate for this campaign for it to succeed for our national good.
A2. Awareness	It can kill innocent people. There are many small but important things all of us can do.
A3. Acceptance	We take charge of our share in it, so that we do not become the weak link in the chain.
A4. Analysis	It is found that severity, likelihood, and hence risk are all high. We identify and evaluate the hot spots.
A5. Action	We eliminate all stagnant water at our homes, and at our workplaces, and take all preventive measures.

Rest of the article follows below:

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Table 3. The 5A-Way to working at height

The 5-A-s	Stake-holders					
	Owner	Designer	Contractor	Manager / Engineer	Supervisor / Foreman	Worker
A1. Attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety is a core value, just as the well-being of my family. No worker should fall from height. The company should succeed in its safety policies. 					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I (and all co-workers) should be safe. Company should succeed.
A2. Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Falling from height is certain death to the worker Many losses and drastic legal penalties will follow Loss of reputation will affect business, and have industry-wide and national impact 					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most common accident with worst tragedy Bad for company
A3. Acceptance	Will accept responsibility to:					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address all legal, financial, and other consequences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design risks out, throughout life-cycle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure safety during scaffold erection, use and dismantling, and other construction processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement design, SWP and safety measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enforce SWP and safety Constantly attend to critical job steps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work safely Use PPE correctly Follow all safety instructions
A4. Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial and work planning Check site conditions Conduct RA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design details and drawings, for life-cycle safety Include RA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Erection details, materials, RA and SWP Rescue measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drawings RA and SWP Method statements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Checklists, RA recommendations Rescue details 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work details, health care Avoid bad practices and misuse of PPE Learn self-rescue
A5. Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide funds and facilities Accept RA Empower safety staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit complete design and drawings Interact with contractor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide all materials, services, and safeguards Interact with designer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversee, organise, coordinate, manage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check constantly and ensure strict compliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Properly check, use, and maintain PPE Adhere to rules

4. Application to working at height

Finally, 5A-Way may be applied to different stake-holders – from owner to worker – in a project involving working at height, as in Table 3.

5. Conclusion

The 5A-Way proposed here may not be a brand-new sophisticated technique or a panacea for all our workplace ills. But the author hopes that it will be one more path – a fresh trick if you will – to pro-actively understand and solve a safety problem right from the concept stage to completion.

6. Reference

1. Krishnamurthy, N., "Introduction to Risk Management", 88p, ISBN: 978-981-05-7924-1, 2007.

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In Second Quarter (June 2007) issue of 'Safety Matters', Dr. N. Krishnamurthy's article "On Changing a Light Bulb – A Tutorial", p.16, column 2, line 11 from the bottom: For 'Medium risk 2a', please read 'Medium risk 2c'.

