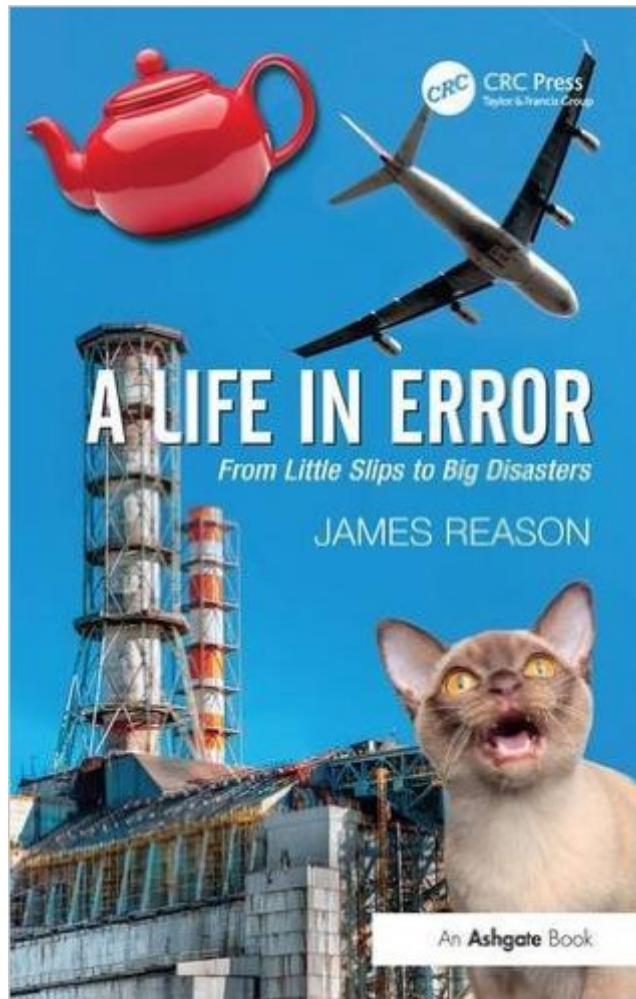# A Life In Error: From Little Slips To Big Disasters

Synopsis

This succinct but absorbing book covers the main way stations on James Reasonâ ™s 40-year journey in pursuit of the nature and varieties of human error. In it he presents an engrossing and very personal perspective, offering the reader exceptional insights, wisdom and wit as only James Reason can. The journey begins with a bizarre absent-minded action slip committed by Professor Reason in the early 1970s - putting cat food into the teapot - and continues up to the present day, conveying his unique perceptions into a variety of major accidents that have shaped his thinking about unsafe acts and latent conditions. A Life in Error charts the development of his seminal and hugely influential work from its original focus into individual cognitive psychology through the broadening of scope to embrace social, organizational and systemic issues. The voyage recounted is both hugely entertaining and educational, imparting a real sense of how James Reasonâ ™s ground-breaking theories changed the way we think about human error, and why he is held in such esteem around the world wherever humans interact with technological systems. This book is essential reading for students, academics and safety professionals of all kinds who are interested in avoiding breakdowns that can cause serious damage to people, assets and the environment.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This isn't the book I expected. The blurb refers to "the main way stations on James Reason's 40-year journey in pursuit of the nature and varieties of human error" and a "very personal

perspective", so I expected a memoir. Instead, I'd say the book is about 10% memoir and the rest is a survey of thinking related to safety and failure, beginning with a focus on psychological aspects and gradually broadening out to encompass organizational, social, and systemic aspects. This sequence happens to follow the chronological progression of Reason's thinking on these matters during his career, which also roughly parallels the thinking of the safety community in general during this period. At ~125 pages, the book is short, but there's a lot of content packed into it, so it requires concentration and isn't a breezy read - the feel is more like a literature review (though there are few citations to the literature). As such, I recommend this book primarily to those seeking an introductory overview of safety thinking or a synoptic review.

I was expecting more. Reason is a brilliant person. By virtue of the title as well as the clever cover, I was expecting more in the way of illustrative error examples, rather than the more scholarly expository of his theoretical error models. Instead, he gives only a few error events, and then leaps into rather sophisticated perceptual and behavioral discussions.

Another outstanding effort from Mr. Reason. If the human element and more specifically, human error, is your interest, then this book is a must. James Reason is one of the foremost experts in this field and not only does this shine through in his work, he also passes it on so eloquently.

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