

DIFFERENT - DIFFICULT - DANGEROUS

There's an old saying – “the best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry”. What this means is no matter how carefully a project is planned, something may still go wrong. Circumstances or events will arise (either singularly or cumulatively) that will test our planning.

Some call these situations ‘**Upset Conditions**’ – in other words, a change from normal conditions or work practice, something that results in a greater impact than anticipated or something totally unexpected occurs!

The trigger for such events is often a situation or circumstance that is **DIFFERENT - DIFFICULT - DANGEROUS**. Just last week we had an example of such an event in a North Island road construction operation. Despite sound management planning, including a safe work plan with hazard ID and risk controls, a significant section of hill side released while operations were underway. The plan had observers in place. They raised the alarm allowing the machines to retreat to the safety zone when the hill started to move.



As a consequence of this event, an independent expert view was sought to provide advice and assistance in determining a course of action. Key considerations were;

- An assessment of site safety,
- Determining risk exposure to operators working around the slip,
- Determining the feasibility of continuing construction works and if so, what remedial action is required.

The independent expert noted that, to date, the standard of construction is very high.

The current plan has been reviewed and the following steps incorporated into or reinforced within the Safe work plan;

- Continue utilising all personnel to “spot” for unusual fretting or slumping.

- Construction of a 2nd bench to relieve any overburden that is potentially loaded above the slip apex, (see diagram on next page).
- Construct the pilot road grade past the slip to provide a more expedient escape route for machines, in the event of more slumps. A third bench will be constructed to minimise the risk of this occurring while construction is undertaken.



- No person will be outside of machine cabs at any time, unless in the safe zone adjacent to the bottom crossing.
- The daily work plan will be reviewed and discussed at each break during the day.
- Any noticeable or dramatic change in soil structure will result in a withdrawal and further discussion. A change in plan may be necessary.
- No work is planned / undertaken when heavy rain is forecast.

This event serves as a timely reminder... “If a task or job you are intending to do is **DIFFERENT, DIFFICULT or DANGEROUS**, pause for a minute or two... think about the **RISKS** and come up with a **PLAN** and **AGREEMENT** on how to eliminate or reduce the risk”.

Wayne Dempster (H&S Manager)

“CONTINUOUS LEARNING - OUR SAFETY JOURNEY”

