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## A Just Culture

A healthy safety culture must include a Hazard/Error Reporting System (HERS). And the key to a successful HERS is a *Just Culture*. A Just Culture is a culture that acknowledges that well-intentioned people still make mistakes and they should not be punished for slips, lapses, mistakes, and other common everyday UNINTENDED errors. Yet, a line is still drawn where willful violations and purposeful unsafe acts must be dealt with in punitive form. The general indications are that only around 10 percent of actions contributing to bad events are judged as culpable (Reason, 2004). The bottom line of a Just Culture is *trust.* Employees must know that they can report hazards and errors without sanction. Once this trust is established then an organization can have a reporting culture, something that provides the system with an accessible memory, which, in turn, is the essential underpinning to a learning culture (Reason, 2004). Along the same lines, Eiff (1999) suggests that, "An effective and systematic reporting system is the keystone to identifying the weakness and vulnerability of safety management before an accident occurs. The willingness and ability of an organization to proactively learn and adapt its operations based on incidents and near misses before an accident occurs is critical to improving safety."

Participation in *hazard* reporting is relatively easy because employees objectively report the things they "see." On the other hand, *errors* are much more challenging because employees may

be reluctant to report the erroneous things they "do." Is there enough trust in your company culture so that employees feel comfortable reporting errors that they personally commit, even if the report is anonymous? Think about it.