Prevention of "simple accidents at work" with major consequences

The concept "simple accidents" is understood as traumatic events with one victim. In the last 10 years many European countries have seen a decline in the number of fatalities, but there still remain many severe accidents at work. In the years 2009–2010 in European countries 2.0–2.4 million occupational accidents a year were notified leading to 4500 fatalities and 90,000 permanent disabilities each year. The article looks at the concept "accident" to find similarities and distinctions between major and simple accident characteristics. The purpose is to find to what extent the same kinds of prevention or safety methodologies and procedures established for major accidents are applicable to simple accidents. The article goes back to basics about accidents causes, to review the nature of successful prevention techniques and to analyze what have been constraints to getting this knowledge used more broadly. This review identifies gaps in the prevention of simple accidents, relating to safety barriers for risk control and the management processes that need to be in place to deliver those risk controls in a continuously effective state. The article introduces the "INFO cards" as a tool for the systematic observation of hazard sources in order to ascertain whether safety barriers and management deliveries are present. Safety management and safety culture, together with the INFO cards are important factors in the prevention process. The conclusion is that we must look at safety as a part of being a professional in all kinds of jobs and occupations as well as at management level. © 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.