The Definition of Human Error and a Taxonomy for Technical System Design

Analysis of industrial accidents and the role of human performance raise the question of the definition of human error. In the chapter, it is argued that the identification of an event as a human error depends entirely upon the stop rule applied for the explanatory search after the fact. Consequently, human errors are not events for which objective data can be collected, instead they should be considered occurrences of man-task mismatches which can only be characterized by a multifaceted description. The outline of a taxonomy to support analysis of event reports and the design of error tolerant systems is given.