

## **Theme Park Safety**

### **High Reliability Organization -- Systems Thinking**

#### **Exemplar: Walt Disney Parks and Resorts**

At Walt Disney Parks and Resorts (Disney), “safety remains the top priority” and it has been that way “since Walt Disney envisioned Disneyland as a place families could have fun together in a safe, clean atmosphere.”<sup>1</sup> Disney’s focus on “making every trip to our parks and resorts a magical experience free of accidents”<sup>2</sup> is a high reliability organizing goal which they have exemplified for the theme park industry for many years. Disney maintains an impressive comprehensive systems approach to ensuring a consistently safe experience for over 20 million guests to the Disney World (Orlando) park alone each year and more than 100,000 Cast Members worldwide. “Safety is literally built into every design” to create and maintain the safety of all Disney attractions. From the design, engineering, production, and testing of new attractions to safety training for staff and education for guests, Disney lives its culture of operational excellence with a focus on maintaining safety every day. Hospitals and healthcare systems should emulate the Disney approach to systems thinking that is realized through a comprehensive and continuous multi-faceted safety management system.

**Safety Team** – A broad range of expertise is represented on Disney’s Safety Team including engineering, quality assurance, maintenance, attraction operations, microbiology, ergonomics, human factors, certified safety professionals, environmental protection, and theme park design. The team integrates best practices and new ideas from related industries and scientific disciplines into their safety protocols, develops, evaluates, and implements new safety technologies, and coordinates with outside groups to advance safety.

**Smart Safety Systems** – Disney designed and developed, for example, a “smart” seat belt for use on some of their thrill rides that cannot be unlocked by the guest until the ride vehicle stops. This innovation saves lives and has been issued a patent by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Secure station gates and operator-managed motion controls are other Disney designed safety controls.

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<sup>1</sup> [disney.com/safety](http://disney.com/safety), Safety at Walt Disney Parks and Resorts

<sup>2</sup> [disney.com](http://disney.com), Walt Disney Parks and Resorts, Report on Safety, 2008

**Systematic Approach to Safety** -- Since Disney began operating theme parks in the 1950s, they have created hundreds of internal standards “to guide the safe and reliable design of attractions.” Disney’s design and engineering teams are constantly working to incorporate the most current safety technologies into the design and redesign of their attractions. When designing new attractions, the project teams follow a formal requirements-based engineering process to incorporate safety into the design.

**Safety Technology** – Advanced safety technologies – many of them developed by Disney – are equipped on Disney’s attractions in a combination of safety systems unique to the attraction. Examples include: redundant brakes; dual-ride control systems; monitored seat belts; redundant track sensors; pressurized tubular track rail; automated barriers that restrict guests trying to board a ride prematurely; anti-rollback mechanisms; multi-screen video monitoring; computerized message systems; motor controller over-speed detection; and backup power.

**Comprehensive Attraction Safety Program** – Disney’s safety commitment continues throughout the life of an attraction with skilled operators, thorough maintenance routines, vigilant quality assurance, and proactive communication to guests about their safety responsibilities.

**Cast Member Training** – Cast Members who operate attractions at the theme park receive extensive training on both general safety practices and principles and the specific operational safety requirements of the attraction they are assigned to. Experienced trainers provide uniform training materials, personal instruction, and systematic and routine assessments of Cast Member safety and operational knowledge and skills. “Cast Members are not permitted to operate rides until they have demonstrated command of attraction mechanics and operating procedures through a combination of written exams, on-the-job assessments, and, in some cases, computer simulation.”

**Informing Guests About the Safe Use of Attractions** – Guest behaviors and adherence to safe practices plays “a critical role in making every trip to our parks and resorts a magical experience free of accidents.” Disney uses a broad range of communication tools and informational resources to help visitors make safe and responsible choices while in the park. These include pamphlets, guide maps, signs,

verbal instructions, audio messages, and ground markings as safety warnings and controls.

**“Mickey After Midnight”** – Every night after the park closes, maintenance teams review and inspect each attraction and rides are not authorized for operation until they are cleared after preventive and corrective maintenance has been performed. “Thousands of hours of maintenance and inspection every day are an integral part of our daily routine.” In addition to the nightly inspections, vehicles are regularly taken out of operation for scheduled service, parts are inspected, tested, and replaced when needed.

**Pre-Opening Checklist** – A couple of hours before the park opens in the morning, ride operators use a detailed checklist from each attractions’ Operating Guide to perform pre-opening checks of key ride components such as seating restraints, video monitors and ride control systems. The Cast Member’s shift starts hours before the first guest arrives in order to allow enough time to complete this important process in a thoughtful and thorough way.

**Public Reporting of Events** – Walt Disney World (Orlando) immediately reports any fatality that occurs in the park to the Florida Department of Agriculture and reports on a quarterly basis any other serious safety events that are ride-related.

**Annual External Inspections** – In addition to Disney’s in-house safety inspectors, state-approved external inspectors and engineers submit an annual inspection report to the State.

**Anticipate and Prevent Event Reoccurrence** – Following an event, Disney’s Safety Team conduct their own investigation and causal analysis and “use the results of these investigations to help anticipate and prevent recurrences.”

**Annual Operations Audits** – The inspectors and engineers on Disney’s Quality Assurance Team conduct an Annual Operations Audit of all registered attractions which focuses on the three (3) key elements of safe attraction operations: 1) pre-opening procedures, 2) the daily checklist, and 3) training.

**Food Safety** – Disney Parks and Resorts includes hundreds of restaurants and various food locations and as a result, they maintain their own state-of-the-art lab

to support a comprehensive, science-based food safety program. Disney requires all of its food suppliers to demonstrate proper food safety practices and Disney's food service Cast participate in rigorous formal food safety training. Disney food service operators at all of their hundreds of food and beverage locations conduct Hazard Analysis of Critical Control Point on a daily basis to verify and document that their food is stored and prepared at the correct temperatures.

**“Wild About Safety”** -- Timon and Pumbaa from Disney's *The Lion King* are the spokesmen for Disney's Safety Education Program “Wild About Safety” shown to millions of guests at Disneyland and Walt Disney World to demonstrate in a fun way the potential consequences of unsafe behaviors. The message, communicated in various collateral, features “14 Good Ways to Safer Days” contributing to greater safety awareness.

**“Safe D Begins With Me”** – A communications initiative that raises Cast Member awareness about the importance of their role in keeping themselves, fellow Cast Members, and guests safe.

**Safety Excellence Awards** – Disney Cast and Crew are rewarded for their significant contributions to safety as a way to reinforce and celebrate safety excellence.

**“Safety in Motion”** – Cast Members are trained to apply proper body mechanics to their daily tasks as a way to reduce injuries and educate them on how to do their jobs safely.

**“Traditions”** – New cast Members are introduced to Disney's safety culture through a one-day course called Traditions. Cast Members regularly perform safety self-assessments to maintain Disney's high safety standards.

**S-A-F-E Hotline** – Cast Members have several ways to report safety concerns including direct conversations with their manager, designated safety lines to directly inform the Safety Department, and a sticker on the back of their I.D. card reminding them to call the S-A-F-E Hotline to report a safety concern.

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