

# Competency

Why Relying on Experience and Training Isn't Enough

Nicole Orr, CRSP



## About Me



- 26 years as a health and safety practitioner
- Instructor for many educational institutions
- Depth of experience in investigations
- Program assessment and development
- Training design and delivery

# What we will discuss...

- Understand what makes someone competent in their role (specifically supervisors and safety people)
- Identify ways to determine competency and ensure personnel are suitable for the role that they are filling
- Review investigation findings to understand where organizations have missed critical competencies that are required

# What is Competent?

- Qualified



- Trained




- Sufficient Experience



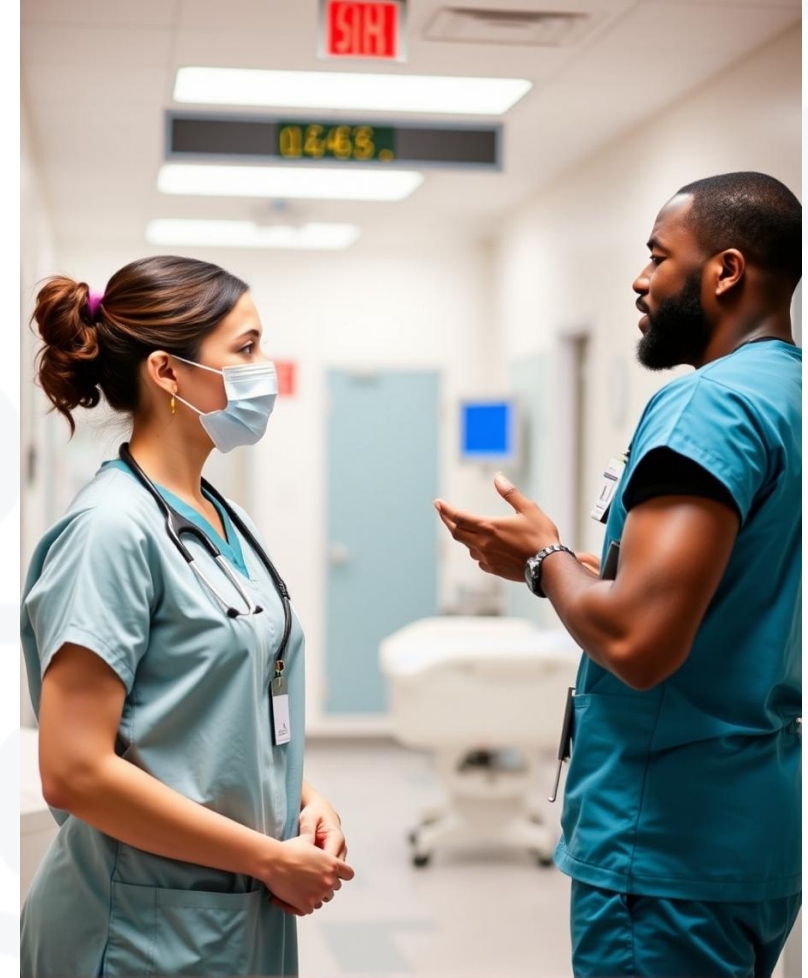
degree  
orientation  
certificate  
internal training  
performance reviews  
OHSMS training  
observations  
Trade qualification  
specific

# Pilot Example

PILOT A	PILOT B	PILOT C
10,000 Hours in simulator	No simulator hours	5000 Hours in Simulator 
Written the training courses for others	Never taken any training, goes on instinct	Training in checklists and manufacturer requirements
Never actually flown a plane	10,000 hours flying time, never had a crash	5000 hours of flying time as captain, incident free

# So that's it?

- Technical skills (training, qualifications, safety knowledge)
- Behavioural
  - Communication skills (verbal, written)
  - Conflict management
  - Ability to coach/mentor
  - Problem Solving
  - Leadership (collaboration, respect, integrity)



# Experience



- Having years in a role does not equal competency in a supervisory or management role.
- How will they deal with interpersonal conflict with someone they used to work with? Do they know how to deal with this?
- Once you are “experienced”, are you *always* experienced? Are you *always* competent?

# Self-Awareness...it's important

- Supervisors & HSE people must hold responsibility for the health and safety of those that report to them
- Have you seen the “hangover effect” of boom cycles in Alberta?
- Safety is a big area of practice





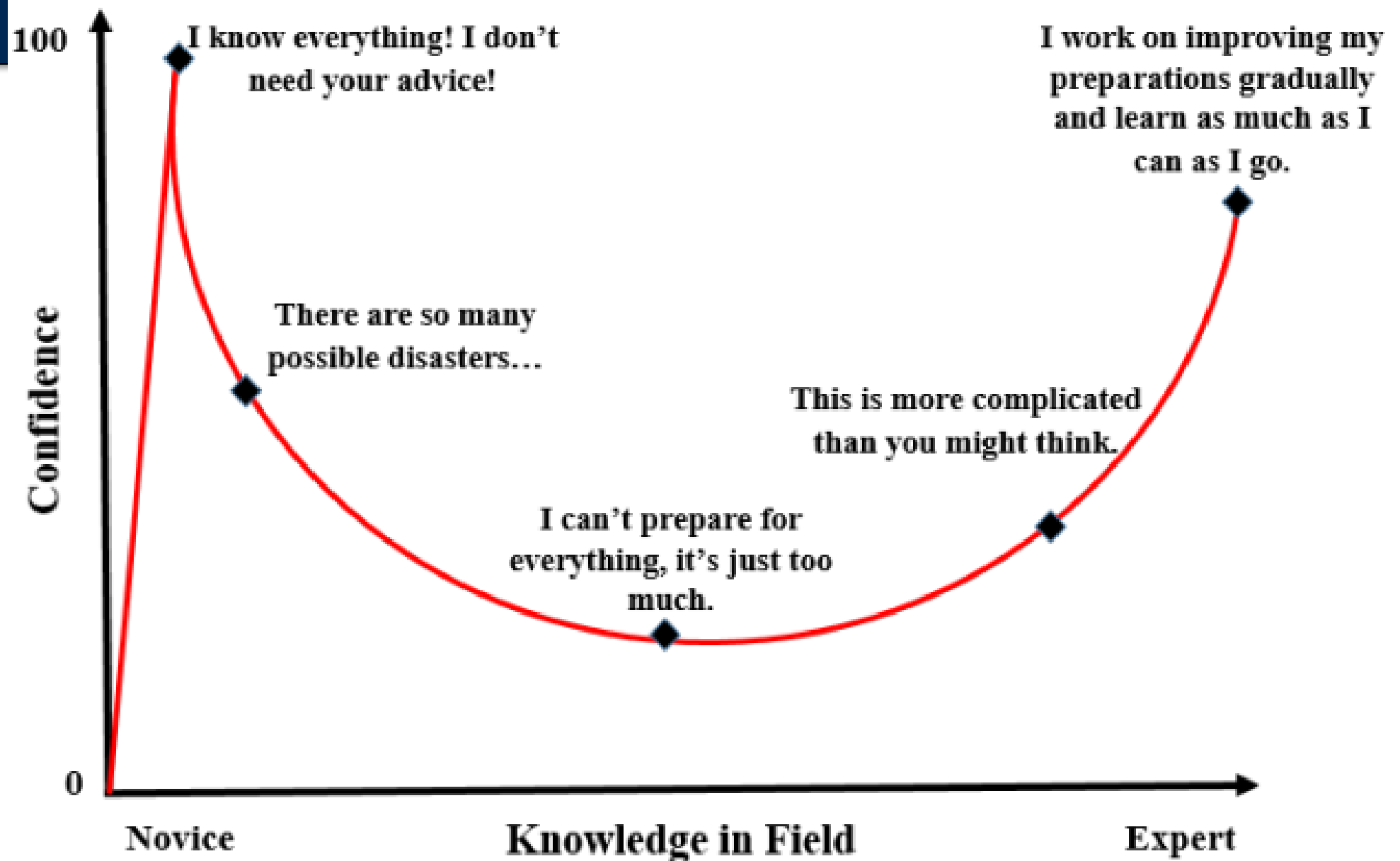
# What do you think?

- Does the absence of incidents show competency?
- Does stating something with confidence make it true?



# The Dunning-Kruger Affect

- A cognitive bias that causes people to overestimate their abilities
- Can hold talented people back from reaching their full potential
- It can also lead to people who are poor performers pursuing leadership roles
- When people with the Dunning-Kruger effect share information, others may be more likely to believe them



# The Dunning-Kruger Affect

Incompetent people tend to:

- Overestimate their skill levels
- Fail to recognize the genuine skill and expertise of other people
- Fail to recognize their own mistakes and lack of skill

# Recent Supervisor Convictions (AB)

Convicted is: Jeffrey Ryan Gross

Date of conviction: September 24, 2024

Location of Offence: Calgary

Date of Offence: December 10, 2021

Type: Serious Incident

Description: A worker was completing roof work and removed plywood covering an opening, intending on accessing a work area concealed by the covering. As the cover was removed, the worker fell through the opening, falling a distance of 4.5 metres. The worker was seriously injured.

Conviction: Jeffrey Ryan Gross, being a work site superintendent, pleaded guilty to contravention of section 4(a)(i) of the *Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act*, for failure to take all precautions necessary to protect the health and safety of the worker by failing to ensure that a temporary cover used to protect an opening or hole, had a warning or marking clearly indicating the nature of the hazard posted near or fixed to the cover, in accordance with section 314(3) of the OHS Code, contrary to section 4(a)(i) of the OHS Act. He was fined \$30,000 inclusive of the 20 per cent victim fine surcharge.

All other charges were withdrawn against Jeffrey Ryan Gross.

Convicted is: O'Reilly Oilfield Services Ltd.

Date of conviction: October 7, 2024

Location of Offence: Valleyview

Date of Offence: July 7, 2021

Type: Serious incident

Description: A work crew was discontinuing a well site using a portable flare stack to burn off excess gas. A disruption in the line sent fluid into the line and caused a fire. A worker positioned near the flare stack sustained serious burn injuries.

Conviction: O'Reilly Oilfield Services Ltd, being a supervisor, pleaded guilty to contravention of section 4(1)(a)(ii) of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, for failure to take all precautions, by adequately controlling use of a portable flare knock-out and associated equipment, necessary to protect the health and safety of every worker under the supervisor's supervision. They were fined \$90,000 inclusive of the 20 per cent victim fine surcharge.

# Criminal Prosecutions

- Ontario supervisor sentenced to five years in prison for workplace fatality (Milton Urgiles, February 18, 2025)
- *"As examples of these criminal negligence cases mount, a common theme emerges: poorly trained, ill-prepared people put into supervisory roles with disastrous results—for both their workers and themselves."*
  - (Graeme Hooper, Mitha Law Group)

# Investigation Findings

- Fraud
- “Industry”
- Anyone can be a contractor or consultant, or a supervisor in some cases
- Job Descriptions



**FAKE**



# Fraud

- Fake designations
- Fake training certificates
- Fake diplomas/degrees
- Fabricated work experience



**Emily Grace**

Is Certified in  
Standard First Aid &  
CPR/AED Level C (Blended)

Certificate number: XXXXXX  
Expiry Date: 2023-09-21  
Issue Date: 2020-09-21  
Issued in: **Alberta**

To validate a certificate, go to [myrc.redcross.ca](http://myrc.redcross.ca) and click on Validate Certificate. Complete both fields and click on Validate. The search result will either verify the certificate or indicate an issue.

Coast2Coast First Aid And Aquatics Inc.  
<http://www.c2cfirstaidaquatics.com/>

**REAL**



# “Industry”

- They’ve been in “industry” for 20 years!
- Two people holding the same or similar titles at different organizations may be responsible for, and have experience in, *vastly* different things.



# Ooo Ooo, Pick Me!

- Anyone can start a business and say they are experienced
- Using subcontractors doesn't necessarily limit liability
- There are many contractors/consultants that have no business being in business



# Job Descriptions

- OHS asks for job descriptions during investigations
- Many organizations don't have these, or they are outdated
- Outline the required knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors
- Improve hiring decisions & set expectations
- Inform performance reviews

# Interview Employees, Consultants & Contractors

- Specifically crafted questions by people who understand the work.
- Reference Checks (more than one).
- Understand designations and education.



# How to Verify Competency

- It is *multi-layered*
- Verify education
- Probationary periods are a good thing
- Observations and follow up
- Mentor/buddy system for integration period
- Performance reviews (360° is best)

## BLOOM'S TAXONOMY



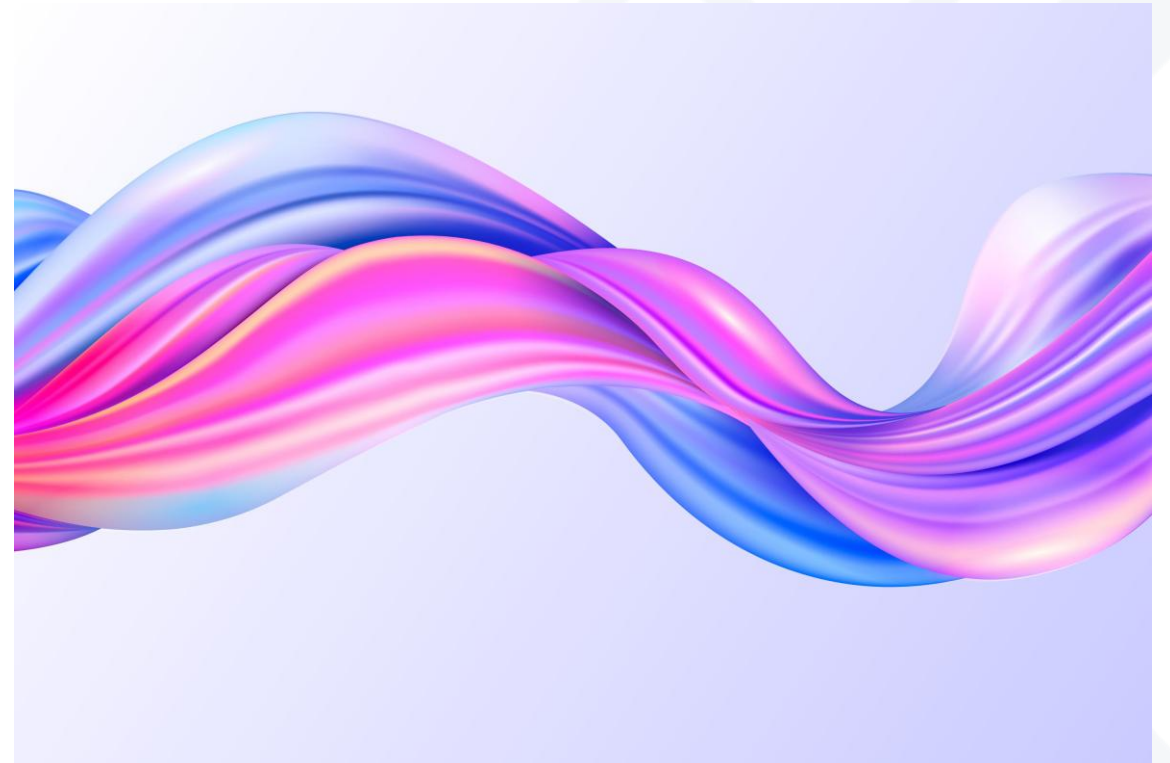
# Everyone Needs Professional Development

- Competency is dynamic and requires attention as it can become stagnant
- Practices, technology and processes change



# Competency is Complicated

- Competency is multi-faceted
- It's not just training; it's understanding organizational requirements and expectations
- It's not static
- It takes work to determine, it's an investment in good people



# Now What?

- Look at your hiring process
- Look at job descriptions
- How are new hires / consultants / contractors hired and monitored?
- How is performance measured?





# Thank You!

