

## **Overcoming dysfunctional momentum: organizational safety as a social achievement**

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Research on organizational safety and reliability largely has emphasized system-level structures and processes neglecting the more micro-level, social processes necessary to enact organizational safety. In this qualitative study we remedy this gap by exploring these processes in the context of wildland fire management. In particular, using interview data gathered from 28 individuals involved in wildland firefighting, we explore the validity of the idea that a deterrent to organizational safety is an inability to redirect ongoing actions once they are underway. The findings suggest four major themes. First, individuals and groups redirect ongoing action as a result of re-evaluating that action. Second, noticing early warning signs, while necessary, is not sufficient to drive change. Third, two social processes – giving voice to concerns and actively seeking alternative perspectives – appear to be key drivers of re evaluation. Fourth, the process of redirecting action is moderated by two social factors: institutional pressures and self-interest. We discuss the implications of these patterns for organization theory and for future research.