

## What are Human Factors?

The term 'Human Factors' relates to a discipline that focuses on understanding the way humans relate to the world around them. One of its aims is to improve operational and human performance, in particular safety within organisations.

In general, a human factor is a physical or cognitive property of an individual or social behaviour which influences the functioning in technological and environmental systems. In social interactions it refers to the properties unique to, or characteristic of, humans.

Human factors issues within an organisation cover a broad range of areas.

Below is shown the three main areas of Human Factors within an organisation to assist in gaining a brief understanding:

- individual factors - health and fitness for duty, drugs and alcohol, fatigue, ergonomics, motivation, work load (high and low), stress, cognitive factors (vigilance, memory, situational awareness), task experience, competencies and human error
- team factors - social norms and behaviours, peer pressure, communication, team climate, diffusion of responsibility, morale, sharing of work
- organisational factors - change management, safety culture, leadership, supervision, policies and procedures, environmental aspects, equipment, rosters and staffing, planning and resource management, emergency management, physical facilities and equipment.