

Health and Safety of Red Cross Workers in Long-Term Homes during Early Days of the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Human Performance Perspective

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Abstract : At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Canadian Red Cross deployed workers into long-term care homes across Canada to support our most vulnerable citizens. It began by recruiting and training small teams of workers to provide non-clinical services for facilities in outbreak. Deployed workers were trained on an approach based on successful Red Cross deployments used with Ebola in which zones were established, levels of protection used, and strict protocols followed to prevent exposure. This paper addresses aspects of human performance through a safety culture lens. The Red Cross deployments highlight valuable insights and are an excellent case study in the principles of human performance and organizational culture. This paper looks at human performance principles, including human fallibility, predictability of error-likely situations, avoiding events by understanding reasons mistakes occur, and the influence on behaviour by organizational factors. This study demonstrates how the Red Cross's organizational culture and work design positively influenced performance to protect workers and residents/clients. Lastly, this paper shares lessons that can be applied in many workplaces to improve worker health and safety and safety culture. This critical examination is based on the author's experience as a Senior Occupational Health and Safety Advisor with the Red Cross during the pandemic as part of the team responsible for developing and implementing biological safety practices in long-term care deployments.

Keywords : COVID, human performance, organizational culture, work design

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