

# Letters

Dear Editor;

I can't get enough of the Marianne Jennings' columns in NP. In her column, *This Stuff Just Wants Out There*, (August 2008) she talked about companies promptly taking public responsibility for their actions or inactions. She advised that when a company makes a mistake to get it out there and get it over with.

I clipped and copied this article and sent this to each of my four kids, with a note saying, "See, I told you so". My wife and I have always told them that, "the truth is a stubborn thing—it always looks for daylight". Like a big pimple on a teenager, the more you cover it up, the bigger it seems to be. We'd tell them that when you make a mistake or hurt someone, acknowledge it and say you're sorry. It is an act of civility and a sign of respect. People will forgive you faster than you forgive yourself.

In like manner, when you fess up to the public (or the government), you are saying more about the authenticity of your compliance program (and organization) than any error ever could.

Signed,

John Landreth CPA, CFE, CHC  
1810 W. Birch Lane  
Park Ridge, Illinois  
847-525-6529

Dear Editor:

We read with interest your comments (From the Editor) in the August 2008 (Vol. 27, Number 3) issue of *New Perspectives*. Our article on risk management appears in the same issue. We would like to speak to some of the comments in your column:

You commented: *We get worked up over the safety of nuclear power plants, (that have yet to kill anyone in more than 50 years), and accept as non-threats tobacco advertising anesthetized to the 1,200 fellow Americans who get knocked-off each day from smoking.*

Our thoughts are that mitigation of potential accidents needs to be viewed within the prisms of likelihood of occurrence and significance of impact. The fact that no one has been killed in

more than 50 years would be weighed into the mitigation plan, but just because no one has been killed in 50 years is not reason in itself to have an "out of sight out of mind mentality". What needs to occur subsequent to this identification is an assessment as to the likelihood of occurrence and impact that this would have. If there was a nuclear accident in a heavily populated area, could there be a strong risk that one million lives could be put in jeopardy? Is this a risk worth taking? Think about Chernobyl and its continued aftermath.

Relative to the tobacco advertising it is fair to say that there will always be those who will continue to smoke and those who will continue to die even upon giving up smoking because their lungs have become so diseased. I am not sure that we accept as non threats the tobacco advertising because the 1,200 fellow Americans who get knocked off each day is significantly reduced from what it was years ago. Perhaps more needs to be done. We would need to know the actual dollars being spent, how the death rate has declined and so many other factors.

In summary, we think that you are comparing apples to oranges and are making it sound like we are wasting money in fruitless areas while more and more individuals die each day. We do not believe this to be the case.

You commented: *Avian flu causes everyone great angst while health officials grapple with protecting us from something that has harmed exactly no one here. Meanwhile, the common flu is the major contributor to 36,000 funerals annually, but vaccinations are pretty much ignored by most.*

## Talk with us.

Tell us what you think of this issue of *New Perspectives*.

We can be reached at:

Email: newkes@comcast.net or  
editor@AHIA.org  
Post: 49 Park Street  
Newport, NH 03773

*Letters may be edited for clarity and length.*

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[dstumph@resourcenter.com](mailto:dstumph@resourcenter.com)

To the comment on Avian flu that it causes everyone great angst, we respond—it should cause everyone great angst because if it ever becomes transmittable from human to human, would we want to have another 1918-1919 influenza? Relative to the 36,000 funerals from the flu, we need to know

more than just the numbers. Many already take a flu shot. Were there other compounding illnesses in some of the deaths? Could perhaps more be done? We would need to look at the entire picture. Again it's the process of identifying the risk and then assessing its significance and likelihood of occurrence.

Sincerely,

Dan Helming, CIA, CPA  
Arnold Schanfield, CPA  
Weiser, LLP  
ERM Associates  
NYC, NY  
Fort Lee, NJ