

## **What makes an engineer a risk engineer?**

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### ***Abstract***

It is about forty years since the notion of risk engineering was introduced in Australia with the formation of the Risk Engineering Society of the then Institution of Engineers, Australia. A few years later an engineer, in a letter to the editor, asked what exactly was it that risk engineers did or offered? That question could still be asked. This paper reviews the origins of engineers' interest in risk as the basis of a modern scientific, educational and practice-oriented consideration of the question. It is contended that, taken as a whole, risk engineers have lost knowledge of the underlying science of risk through failing to embrace the subject in their research and education roles, in turn through a general lack of awareness that there is a science of risk. A consequence of this lack of content and identity is that the difference between a person with a degree in engineering practicing in the safety and health or risk management fields and a risk engineer has been lost. The paper gives examples in support of this contention and makes suggestions for a professional structure that would invigorate university education in risk and provide a proper professional structure of value to a society that exists in an increasingly hazardous world.