

# Man-made Catastrophes and Risk Information Concealment: Case Studies of Major Disasters and Human Fallibility

*Dmitry Chernov, Didier Sornette*  
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## Man-made Catastrophes and Risk Information Concealment



Case Studies of Major Disasters  
and Human Fallibility

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**Dmitry Chernov, Didier Sornette : Man-made Catastrophes and Risk Information Concealment: Case Studies of Major Disasters and Human Fallibility** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Man-made Catastrophes and Risk Information Concealment: Case Studies of Major Disasters and Human Fallibility:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. The big challenge of misbehaviorBy Ulrich WeidmannWith this

study Dmitry Chernov and Didier Sornette provide a great contribution for the understanding of man-made disasters. For this purpose, they didn't choose a theoretic framework, but mainly an in-depth analysis of selected case studies of the last decades. These disasters cover a broad range of fields, starting from industry, stepping to the financial sector, politics, medical care and ending up with retail as well as the consumer-oriented production industry. In an impressive and very well written way, they give insights, how relatively small initial mistakes or accidents may lead to disastrous consequences for directly, but also for just accidentally concerned persons. Not the primary cause as such leads to the huge loss of lives and/or values, but mainly the misbehavior of responsible persons. Similar patterns of misbehavior may be identified everywhere, independently from the concrete case. They show clearly that information concealment may be the result of manifold influences and contexts. It can be understood as the result of underlying severe general shortcomings in the interaction between the actors as well as of the organization. They are strongly related to personal or cultural aversion against failures and a strictly short-term or profit-oriented management context. Therefore, the entire chapter 3 may even be considered also as guideline for good management!

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Great warning!

By Yossi Sheffi

Dr. Chernov and Professor Sornette have identified one of the main culprits in major disasters — the concealment of risk information. While this notion has been mentioned in the media for some time — especially following major disasters, the book is a pioneering work which converts media noise (blame games, sensationalism, posturing, etc.) into a solid analytical framework, based on historical lens. It "connects the dots" and allows decision makers to examine their processes and take actions. The book includes a description of dozens of actual disasters, each followed by a thorough analysis and a summary of how the information was concealed from decision makers, governments, and the public, both before, during, and after the disaster. It demonstrated how such lack of transparency may have led to the disaster in the first place and how it hampered mitigation efforts, causing unnecessary bad outcomes. The richness of the examples brings the book to life and provides useful warning and understanding of the underlying processes for decision makers and regulators.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Amazing book!! A must have for anyone that works with risks.

By Andreacut; Luiz Cabral Dutra

I've been working within the risk management industry for a decade and read some interesting books about the subject. I can say that this is by far the best book ever about risks. No framework, no ISO, no ISACA, just.....reality. I don't fully accept the theory that all risk are based on uncertainty and this book simply proves that major risks are not usually uncertain conditions. The only uncertainty is when the event will happen. Is like playing a russian roulette with the industry, but there is no uncertainty about it's magnitude or possibility. Just let time and human do their "jobs" and it will happen, sooner or later. I can't recall the number of times that I've heard the excuse of manager: "I didn't knew", "No one told me about this issue before", "I had no idea that I couldn't do this/that", etc etc. The lack of controls, training, procedures, falsification, negligence, overconfidence, sharing information, also the existence of bad or no information, registry, maintenance etc etc. Uncertainty risk exists? YES they do! But many of the risks we face are not uncertain. They have been hidden by someone and sometimes in plain sight. But the excess of trust or lack of knowledge don't let us see the reality.

This book discusses the risks of information concealment in the context of major natural or industrial disasters — offering detailed descriptions and analyses of some 25 historical cases (Three Mile Island nuclear accident, Bhopal disaster, Challenger Space Shuttle explosion, Chernobyl nuclear disaster, Deepwater Horizon oil spill, Fukushima-Daiichi nuclear disaster, Enron's bankruptcy, Subprime mortgage crisis, Worldwide Spanish flu and SARS outbreaks, etc.) and applying these insights to selected on-going cases where such information concealment is suspected. Some successful examples of preventive anti-concealment practice are also presented. In the book, the term "concealment" is used to represent the two distinct behaviors uncovered in the investigations: (i) facts and information about an organization and its functioning being hidden from those that need them — here the concealment can be due to various factors, such as complexity and miscommunication, to name but two — and (ii) the conscious and deliberate action of keeping important information secret or misrepresenting it. This second meaning makes up a surprisingly important part of the evidence presented. Accordingly, emphasis has been put on this second aspect and the approach is more pragmatic than academic, remaining focused on evidence-based practical and useful factors. It raises awareness and provides valuable lessons for decision-makers, risk specialists and responsible citizens alike. This work is also intended as a fact-based reference work for future academic and scholarly investigations on the roots of the problem, in particular regarding any psychological or sociological modeling of human fallibility.

From the Back Cover

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**About the Author** Dmitry Chernov is a researcher in the Chair of Entrepreneurial Risks at ETH Zurich. He has more than 15 years of experience as a corporate communication consultant in the former Soviet Union Republics, focusing on improving investor and government relations, as well as crisis communication within the following industries: oil and gas, chemical, electric power, metals and mining, telecommunication, transport, etc. He specializes on researching solutions for efficient risk information transmission that enables timely decision-making before and during industrial disasters.

**Didier Sornette** is Professor on the Chair of Entrepreneurial Risks at ETH Zurich, Director of the Financial Crisis Observatory, Co-founder of the ETH Risk Center and member of the Swiss Finance Institute. He has received many prizes and honors, among them the 2000 Research McDonnell award and the Risques-Les Echos prize 2002. He is a Fellow of the World Innovation Foundation (2004) and, since 2013, of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Prof. Sornette has edited and authored a number books, many of them published by Springer and is a member of the Editorial and Advisory Board of the Springer Complexity publishing program.