**Precautionary Principle**

The precautionary principle states that when a human-induced activity raises a significant threat against the environment or human health, precautionary measures should be taken, even if there is no solid scientific evidence to suggest cause and effect.

The precautionary principle counters the burden-of-proof approach, which essentially refuses to do anything to prevent suspect harm unless there is undeniable evidence. It encourages people to take action when they suspect something is amiss, instead of waiting for evidence to come along, which may often be too late. It supports the view that we should be careful about the situation unless we are absolutely certain that nothing can go wrong.

A good example of the problems with the burden-of-proof approach and the harm it can cause is the Challenger flight incident, where NASA launched a spaceship even though there were doubts regarding safety, since there was no evidence to suggest something may go wrong. The spaceship exploded soon after launch.

There are a few criticisms commonly made of the precautionary principle. One common criticism is that it hinders innovation.

The precautionary principle is used when hazards cannot be fully expressed due to insufficient scientific knowledge. The precautionary principle essentially has four major parts:

* There is a threat
* The threat is uncertain and does not have evidence to back it up
* Some action must still be taken
* The actions that must be taken are mandatory