

## **Transcript of the five domino model of accident causation applied to IT systems**

We can adapt H W Heinrich's (1931) five domino model of accident causation to visualise an IT incident cascading from a single causal event.

Henrich imagined an incident to be the natural culmination of a series of events which occur in a fixed and logical order. He pictured these events as a row of standing dominoes, aligned so that the fall of the first domino causes the fall of the entire row.

For example, one event might be a gap in how the performance of our system is documented.

Without adequate documentation for this part of the system, there is a risk of introducing a performance bug.

If the performance bug is missed in the testing phase then it will be released to the live system.

If enough users trigger the bug, then the system's performance will degrade.

If the system continues to deteriorate, then eventually the system becomes unstable and there will be a widespread outage.

Retracing this chain of events will lead us to the root cause.

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## **References**

Heinrich, H.W. (1931) *Industrial Accident Prevention: A Scientific Approach*, New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

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