

DISASTER AVOIDED: WAS IT DUE TO SYSTEM RESILIENCE, ROBUSTNESS OR PURE CHANCE?

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Abstract

The commonly agreed definition describes resilience as “the intrinsic ability of a system to adjust its functioning before, during or after changes and disturbances, so that it can sustain required operations under both expected and unexpected conditions”. While the definition in theory appears to be sound and self-explanatory, translating the concept into practice is far from being straightforward. While the definition provides an alternative to that of Safety(-I), it is actually subject to the same vagueness, subjectivity and under specification. Over time, it has also become a popular buzzword which both research and practice communities exploit to promote ideas at times not even related to the concept of resilience. A number of case studies inspired by the true events from the aviation industry are used to illustrate this confusion and highlight the gaps between the theory and practice when it comes to the application of the Resilience Engineering (RE) concepts. Lastly, a number of recommendations from the perspective of the aviation industry will be provided towards scaling up and speeding up the adoption of the ideas of RE.