

# Whose line is it anyway?

Should effective problem solving and the decisions we make from it be based on cold hard facts with emotion left out of the equation? Most business people seem to think so. But “cold hard facts” often turn out to be the standpoint of somebody who wields influence – and that standpoint often has an agenda or motive behind it.



***Should we avoid all nuclear power or are we satisfied that nuclear waste is managed professionally?***

Take the debate around nuclear energy waste for example. One side of the debate regards all nuclear waste as potentially dangerous and to be avoided completely. The other side feels that the waste is treated professionally and there is so little of it that it is of no concern whatsoever.

Most people seem to adopt one of the standpoints without even a token amount of research into the extent of the problem. Establishing how much nuclear waste is actually generated and how much needs to be managed is not a straightforward exercise. There are a number of different nuclear processes being used, each producing a different amount of waste. And not everyone involved in the industry around the world gives accurate reports on their production activities.

Many of us only think of the spent fuel rods when asked about nuclear waste. But one also needs to consider the waste piles and tailings from uranium mines and the waste from the extraction process, which is considerably more in volume. The article in the link below gives a good perspective of the types of waste, estimates of the waste and the difficulties in trying to determine those estimates: [http://www-pub.iaea.org/MTCD/publications/PDF/te\\_1591\\_web.pdf](http://www-pub.iaea.org/MTCD/publications/PDF/te_1591_web.pdf)

What about the amount of radiation that each type of waste emits? According to the article in the link below, over a million Gauteng residents are exposed to high levels of uranium with some areas in the West Rand exceeding that of disaster zones from Chernobyl, site of the 1986 Ukrainian nuclear disaster. But if you read the article a bit more thoroughly, it turns out that people exposed to those levels are living much too close to mine dumps: <https://www.health-e.org.za/2015/10/15/gautengs-mine-dumps-brimming-with-radioactive-uranium/>

There are other sources of radiation that we are commonly exposed to which include radioactivity in rocks, cosmic radiation and medical X-rays.

Because the issue is complicated one is inclined to accept the standpoint of someone who has gained knowledge about the subject. So whose standpoint do you take - the expert with whom you identify the most?

Root Cause Analysis Teams should be able to see beyond the standpoints of influential managers and experts and be prepared to challenge them. Otherwise they run the risk of working from a similar position of misinformation as do most of the population on the subject of nuclear waste.