Plan to Fail

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Abstract

The process industry has widely adopted the Functional Safety Standards IEC61508 [1] and IEC61511 [2] for achieving the Functional Safety. These standards lay the framework for achieving functional safety by considering the entire life-cycle of the safety instrumented system (SIS). Typical SIS safety life-cycle phases and functional safety assessment stages are illustrated in Figure-7 of IEC61511-1 [2].

The design and engineering of the SIS are most often focused on achieving the required risk reduction for the safety instrumented functions (SIF). However, with this single minded focus, the design and engineering of the SIS frequently progresses without a well thought out safety plan.

“By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail – Benjamin Franklin”.

Taking cues from this quote, this paper, “Plan to Fail?” intends to draw attention to importance of having a well understood ‘Safety Plan’ in place. The standards provide guidance for the development of a safety plan. However it is imperative for the functional safety team to ensure that it is aligned with the particular project under consideration. This means establishing goals and concepts early in the project schedule. The plan would then be updated as more details are known and hence be more effectively deployed during each phase of the safety life-cycle.