

## Golden PHAs Are Not Expensive, Unprepared PHAs Are



**Inspired by a great LinkedIn discussion on the psychology of risk communication in PHAs.**

It's a short, honest reflection on PHAs: they're not expensive or complicated, unprepared PHAs are. This piece breaks down what truly makes a PHA golden, and why preparation is the most undervalued skill in process safety.

Over the last 30 years - employing hundreds, serving hundreds of sites, and analyzing thousands of PHAs - the data keeps pointing to the same truth:

PHAs aren't expensive.

Unprepared PHAs are.



## **Golden PHAs Are Not Expensive, Unprepared PHAs Are**

**Here are three reflections, suggestions, I've learned the hard way.**

### **1. Prep Is Golden**

PHA session time is shrinking everywhere - budgets, staffing, and efficiency demands guarantee it. What used to be a 20 - day review becomes 10 days... then 5.

We can't stop that trend.

But we can control how ready people are before they walk into the room.

The best - performing sites treat PHA preparation as a two - year slow burn, not a two - week scramble. They recruit “designates” - people who want to participate, who see it as a chance to learn, contribute, and grow.

Ten minutes a day.

Twenty - four months.

Capturing observations, hazards, near - misses, safeguard behavior, and learnings from similar units.

Do that, and your PHA doesn't just start well - it explodes with insight on Day 1.

### **2. Safety Is Not Expensive - Accidents Are**

We've all heard the phrase.

But here's the modern version:

Safety is an opportunity, not a cost.

When people come prepared, the PHA room fills with energy - not obligation. The young professionals especially shine when they arrive with two years' worth of notes and curiosity.

Nothing accelerates a PHA faster & efficiently than a team that arrives curious, prepared, and ready to contribute.

### **3. Make PHA Participation a Privilege, Not an Assignment**

Imagine a site where people apply to be PHA designates.

Where it's a career - building opportunity.

Where preparation earns recognition.

Where contributions come from evidence, not memory.



## **Golden PHAs Are Not Expensive, Unprepared PHAs Are**

The data is clear: most facilities naturally see only about half of the credible threats present in their systems. But when designates are trained, supported, prepared and curious, that number climbs, and so does the quality of decisions.

### **Replace:**

“Only credible scenarios here.”

“We need to get this done.”

“Ask the expert.”

### **With:**

“I’m ready.”

“I’ve seen the evidence.”

“I know what others have missed.”

“It’s time for this team to consider the full picture.”

This is how a PHA becomes golden.

Not expensive.

Not complicated.

Just prepared.

Golden PHAs are not luck, they’re built.