**My risk is not your risk**

*By Dave Johnson, Dave Johnson’s Writing Shop, former chief editor, Industrial Safety & Hygiene News magazine*

We all have varying perceptions of risk. What’s risky to one is not to another.

Some folks have a fear of flying. Others believe driving home from the airport is more of a risk.

Some folks have a fear of heights. They won’t peer out over the Grand Canyon. Won’t ride rollercoasters. Others love to go hang-gliding, zip lining or parachuting.

This COVID pandemic give us a very public view on risk-taking. This is unusual. Most of what we fear, what we consider risks, are personal and private matters. But now we see every evening on the news groups protesting social distancing and wearing masks. They contend – loudly – that COVID risks have been overstated by an overly intrusive government. We want our freedom back. We want our jobs back. These restrictions are overkill. They don’t believe the risk is worth it.

Polls show most Americans are at peace with the pandemic restrictions. Not a problem. Call them the passive, silent majority. But the squeaky, squawking voice gets the attention. Going negative, confrontations, high emotions get the news coverage.

Reminds me of employees complaining about safety rules in the workplace. Overkill. Too rigid. We don’t need policing. But most workers don’t have a problem with safety rules. They go about their jobs and abide. No big deal.

It’s strange. Risk-taskers and rule-breakers get the publicity. The compliant are taken for granted. But the compliant, those who play it safe, are fascinated by those who don’t. They live vicariously. Watch an Imax movies about death on Mount Everest. Watch TV shows about Navy SEALS and Special Forces ops. Crane their necks watching the guy climb the Empire State building or walk a tightrope between skyscrapers. Can that guy on the motorcycle clear 20 busses lined up below him?

It’s strange. Most of us are not overt risk-takers. But we sure get a kick out of watching others take the risk.

By the way, this trait doesn’t serve us particularly well in the workplace.