

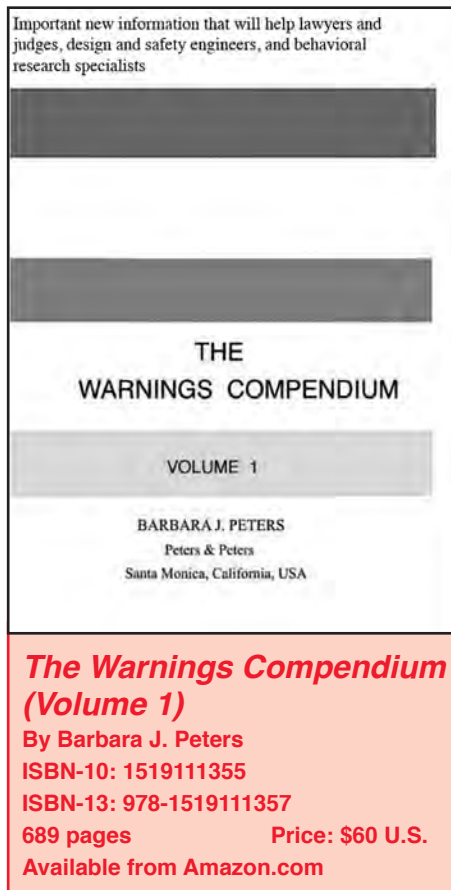
A Well-Thought-Out Book of Warnings

Compendium: “A publication containing a variety of works, e.g., collection, publication, anthology, archives, compilation, digest; a concise but comprehensive summary of a larger work.” The latest book by Barbara Peters, *The Warnings Compendium, Volume 1*, certainly lives up to this definition. This book offers more than 600 pages containing a vast array of facts pertaining to the important topic of *warnings*. Warnings happen to be an important — and often, not well understood — topic in the safety discipline, the human factors discipline and the legal arena. Peters is an experienced safety expert, attorney and former secretary of the International System Safety Society.

Essentially, warnings are basically the specific information provided to indicate that a hazard exists and that certain safe actions must be followed to avoid injury; warnings attempt to control human behavior in order to mitigate a potential danger or threat. It’s not as simple as that, however; many different complexities are involved. This book provides a thorough and thoughtful treatment of this complicated subject.

I like the book; it has opened my eyes to areas and issues I have not previously considered regarding warnings. It has also made me appreciate the meaning and value of a compendium. This book is an excellent effort to cover all issues regarding the complex, and sometimes convoluted, discipline of developing warnings.

Warnings apply to many different fields, such as the design safety engineer who determines if a warning is an appropriate remedy, the human factors specialist who evaluates whether a warning elicits the appropriate human response, and the attorneys and judges who must determine if the appropriate measures were taken when



a mishap occurs. As stated in the book’s preface, “It is appropriate to recognize that warnings alone may provide limited legal protection and communication value.” Peters’ compendium approach attempts to shed light on *all* aspects of warnings — it is not exactly a “how to” book, but more of a “here are all of the things to consider” book. This compendium should be on the bookshelves of system safety specialists, human factors specialists, accident investigators and attorneys.

The Warnings Compendium focuses on warnings, including the identification of hazards, their probable cause and how hazards can be reasonably controlled or prevented via the use of warnings. The book goes well beyond the scope of most books on the topic, covering the gamut of A-to-Z on topics relevant to developing warnings. A sample of just a few of the 53 chapter headings includes:

- Warning Fatigue
- Content
- Adequacy of the Warning
- Ambiguous Messages
- Location
- Conspicuity
- Signal Words and Blocks
- Audience
- Disabilities
- Bystanders
- Intermediaries
- Legibility and Perceptibility
- Continuing Duty to Warn
- Reverse Warnings

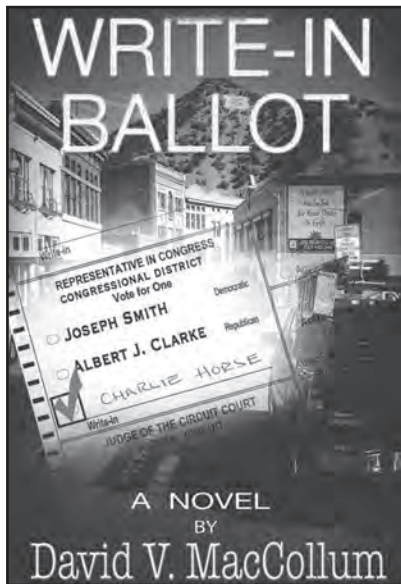
According to the book’s foreword, the upcoming Volume 2 will include an analysis of some warnings in use, as well as a survey of warnings used in specific industries.

Given the exhaustive amount of design information provided in Volume 1, combined with the experience material promised in Volume 2, these two books will make an excellent source of reference material on warnings and human error. Together, they will provide useful and

practical information on theories, methods and specific techniques for controlling human error, along with experience from various industries. *The Warnings Compendium (Volume I)* is a book that should be slowly and carefully digested in order to grasp and comprehend its full content.

— Clif Ericson

Politics, Contributions and Engineering



One of the major concerns of many people today with regard to American politics is large campaign contributions and the associated influence they have on elected officials. One of the most venerable members of the International System Safety Society and longtime contributor to *Journal of System Safety*, David V. MacCollum, has written a novel, *Write-In Ballot*, that addresses this issue. The hero of this story, Mr. Charlie Horse, finds a way to be elected to Congress by using the Internet and obtaining only small campaign contributions from exclusively in-state sources. The new Congressman learns the ways of Washington and teaches his colleagues a thing or two. Congressman Horse is a retired engineer, so the novel has numerous excursions into engineering subjects emphasizing the correction of safety hazards. Mr. Horse has to deal with political intrigue, including the “Tattooed Frog Incident,” in this entertaining novel.

— Chuck Muniak

***Write-In Ballot* By David V. MacCollum**

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