

Murphy's Laws

Selected and edited by M. Divjak

Contents

Things in general

Work in general

Projects and plans

Research

Experiments and data

Equipment and tools

Computers and programs

Writing and papers

Teamwork

Experts

Leadership and management

Bureaucracy

Companies and hierarchy

People

Army and combat

Law and lawyers

Medicine and doctors

School and teachers

Home life

Shopping

Travel

Things in general

If anything can go wrong, it will.

If there is a possibility of several things going wrong, the one that will cause the most damage will be the one to go wrong.

If you know something can go wrong and prepare, something else will go wrong.

Anything that begins well, ends badly, anything that begins badly, ends worse.

Sooner or later, the worst possible set of circumstances is bound to occur.

Negative expectations yield negative results. Positive expectations yield negative results.

Nothing matters very much, and very few things matter at all.

Work in general

No matter how much you do, you'll never do enough.

What you don't do is always more important than what you do.

Whenever you set out to do something, something else must be done first.

Any task worth doing was worth doing yesterday.

Nothing is as easy as it looks.

If it looks easy, it's tough. If it looks tough, it's impossible.

Everything takes longer than you think.

The first ninety percent of the task takes ninety percent of the time, and the last ten percent takes the other ninety percent.

There is nothing so simple that it can't be done wrong.

Once a job is fouled up, anything done to improve it only makes it worse.

Success always occurs in private, and failure in full view.

Projects and plans

The more carefully you plan a project, the more confusion there is when something goes wrong.

The more complicated and grandiose the plan, the greater the chance of failure.

Authorization for a project will be granted only when none of the authorizers can be blamed if the project fails but when all of the authorizers can claim credit if it succeeds.

Zahteve po spremembi načrtov se pojavijo potem in samo potem, ko so načrti gotovi.

Need for project modifications increases proportionally to project completion.

Nothing ever comes out as planned.

Nothing ever gets built on schedule or within budget.

The greater the funding, the longer it takes to make the mistake.

The amount of time required to complete a project is precisely equal to the length of time already spent on it.

Research

All great discoveries are made by mistake.

Progress consists in replacing a theory that is wrong with one more subtly wrong.

Exceptions always outnumber rules.

There are some things which are impossible to know - but it is impossible to know which things these are.

It is a simple task to make things complex, but a complex task to make them simple.

Complex problems have simple, easy-to-understand wrong answers.

For every complex problem, there is a solution that is simple, neat, and wrong.

Inside every large problem is a small problem struggling to get out.

The solution to a problem changes the nature of the problem.

Every solution breeds new problems.

A conclusion is the place where you get tired of thinking.

Experiments and data

If an experiment works, something has gone wrong.

Never replicate a successful experiment.

Experiments should be reproducible - they should all fail in the same way.

Only errors exist.

One man's error is another man's data.

In any collection of data, the figure most obviously correct, beyond all need of checking, is the mistake.

Always draw your curves first, then plot your data.

If the facts do not conform to the theory, they must be disposed of.

Equipment and tools

Everything put together falls apart sooner or later.

Other people's tools work only in other people's gardens.

If nobody uses it, there's a reason.

Computers and programs

Program complexity grows until it exceeds the capacity of the maintainer.

Writing and papers

There is nothing so small that it can't be blown out of proportion.

Any simple idea will be worded in the most complicated way.

If you explain so clearly that nobody can misunderstand, somebody will.

Teamwork and meetings

Teamwork is essential. It allows you to blame someone else.

The man who can smile when things go wrong has thought of someone he can blame it on.

Everyone has a scheme that will not work.

No matter what goes wrong, there is always somebody who knew it would.

You are always complimented on the item which took the least effort to prepare.

No matter how well you do your job, a superior will seek to modify the results.

A meeting is an event at which the minutes are kept and the hours are lost.

The length of a meeting rises with the square of the number of people present.

The efficiency of a committee meeting is inversely proportional to the number of participants and the time spent on deliberations.

The less you enjoy serving on committees, the more likely you are to be pressed to do so.

Experts

An expert is one who knows more and more about less and less until he knows everything about nothing.

To spot the expert, pick the one who predicts the job will take the longest and cost the most.

The least experienced fisherman always catches the biggest fish.

Leadership and management

The first myth of management is that it exists.

Anyone can make a decision given enough facts. A good manager can make a decision without enough facts. A perfect manager can operate in perfect ignorance.

The compromise will always be more expensive than either of the suggestions it is compromising.

Bureaucracy

If there is a way to delay an important decision, the good bureaucracy, public or private, will find it.

If an idea can survive a bureaucratic review and be implemented, it wasn't worth doing.

Companies and hierarchy

Posameznik pleza po kadrovski lestvici, dokler ne doseže svojega nivoja nesposobnosti.

Sčasoma bo vsako mesto v kadrovski piramidi zasedeno s človekom, ki je za to mesto nesposoben.

Delo opravljajo tisti, ki še niso dosegli svojega nivoja nesposobnosti.

In any human enterprise, work seeks the lowest hierarchical level.

Nobody really knows what is going on anywhere within the organization.

People

The sum of the intelligence on the planet is a constant; the population is growing.

In crises that force people to choose among alternative courses of action, most people will choose the worst one possible.

Men and nations will act rationally when all other possibilities have been exhausted.

When people are free to do as they please, they usually imitate each other.

No matter what they're telling you, they're not telling you the whole truth.

No matter what they're talking about, they're taking about money.

Nobody really cares or understands what anyone else is doing.

Everybody lies; but it doesn't matter since nobody listens.

Friends come and go, but enemies accumulate.

Army

Any order that can be misunderstood has been misunderstood.

Law and lawyers

The number of laws will expand to fill the publishing space available.

A proliferation of new laws creates a proliferation of new loopholes.

No man's life, liberty, or property are safe while legislature is in session.

Medicine and doctors

A drug is that substance which, when injected into a rat, will produce a scientific report.

Just because your doctor has a name for your condition doesn't mean he knows what it is.

An alcoholic is a person who drinks more than his own physician.

The severity of the itch is inversely proportional to the reach.

School and teachers

The more general the title of a course, the less you will learn from it. The more specific a title is, the less you will be able to apply it later.

Class schedules are designed so that every student will waste the maximum time between classes.

Every instructor assumes that you have nothing else to do except study for that instructor's course.

Home life

Expenditures rise to meet income.

In order to get a loan you must first prove you don't need it.

Possessions increase to fill the space available for their storage.

If you keep anything long enough, you can throw it away. If you throw it away, you will need it the next day.

You can always find what you're not looking for.

The first place to look for anything is the last place you would expect to find it.

You always find something the last place you look.

If there are only two shows on TV worth watching this week, they will be on at the same time.

In order for something to become clean, something else must become dirty; but you can get everything dirty without getting anything clean.

Washing machines only break down during the wash cycle.

A clean tie attracts the soup of the day.

The chance of the bread falling with the buttered side down is directly proportional to the cost of the carpet.

How long a minute is depends on which side of the bathroom door you're on.

The length of a marriage is inversely proportional to the amount spent on the wedding.

It's always the partner's fault.

The one who snores will fall asleep first.

One child is not enough, but two are far too many.

A child will not spill on a dirty floor.

An unbreakable toy is useful for breaking other toys.

No matter which side of the door the cat or dog is on, it is the wrong side.

The probability of meeting someone you know increases when you are with someone you don't want to be seen with.

Opportunity always knocks at the least opportune moment.

If you're feeling good, don't worry; you'll get over it.

Shopping

You get the most of what you need the least.

You never want the one you can afford.

The label NEW and/or IMPROVED means the price went up.

If it says "one size fits all", it doesn't fit anyone.

If you like it, they don't have it in your size.

If the shoe fits, it's ugly.

No matter how hard you shop for an item, after you bought it, you will find it on sale.

The other line is always faster.

The longer you wait in line, the greater likelihood that you are standing in the wrong line.

The one item you want is never the one on sale.

Travel

Take half as much clothing and twice as much money.

All trails have more uphill sections than they have level or downhill sections.

No matter which way you ride, it's uphill and against the wind.

The mountain look closer than it is.

The mountain gets steeper as you get closer.

When it rains, it pours.

If you're early, it's cancelled, if you are on time, it's late, if you're late, you're late.

Glavni vir

Bloch, A.: *Murphy's Law Complete* .
Mandarin, 1990.