Avoiding Alert Bankruptcy and Burnout

Paige Cruz aka **@paigerduty**

chronosphere

Agenda

01

Scenario I

Agenda

01

Scenario I

02

Alert Fatigue

Agenda

01

Scenario I

02

Alert Fatigue

03

Burnout

Agenda

01

Scenario I

02

Alert Fatigue

03

Burnout

04

Tactics

Agenda

01

Scenario I

02

Alert Fatigue

03

Burnout

04

Tactics

05

Scenario II

01

Scenario I

BEEEEEEEP

BEEEEEEEEEEEP

BEEEEEEEEEEEEP

BEEEEEEEP

BEEEEEEEEEEEP

BEEEEEEEEEEEEP

Why is it firing?

A. Batteries are running low

Why is it firing?

A. Batteries are running low

B. Your roommate burned toast. Again.

Why is it firing?

A. Batteries are running low

B. Your roommate burned toast. Again.

C. You forgot to run the fan during a steamy shower

Why is it firing?

A. Batteries are running low

B. Your roommate burned toast. Again.

C. You forgot to run the fan during a steamy shower

D. Beatrice, your beloved cat knocked over a candle

Needs investigation!

02

Alert Fatigue in Practice

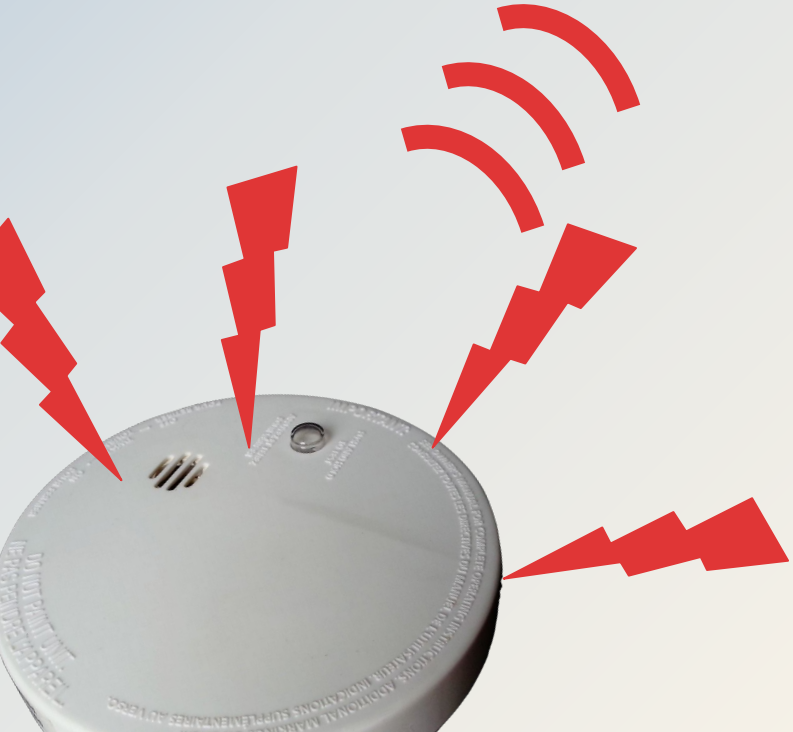
Alert Fatigue 🚨

When the **frequency** or **severity** of alerts causes responder to ignore important alerts or make more mistakes

Batteries ran low

Benny burned toast (again)

Shower Steam



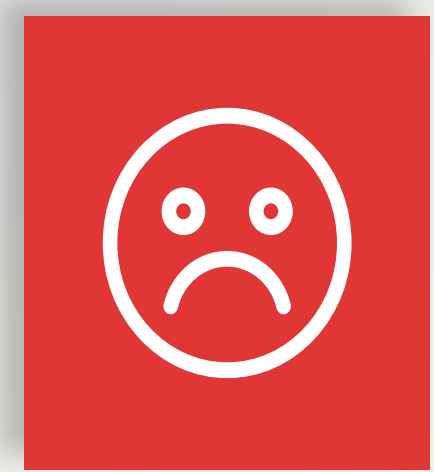
Beatrice knocked over a candle

!Emergencies

Warning

!Emergencies

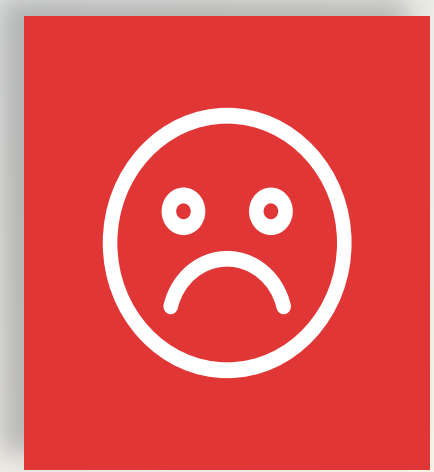
Warning



False Positive

!Emergencies

Warning

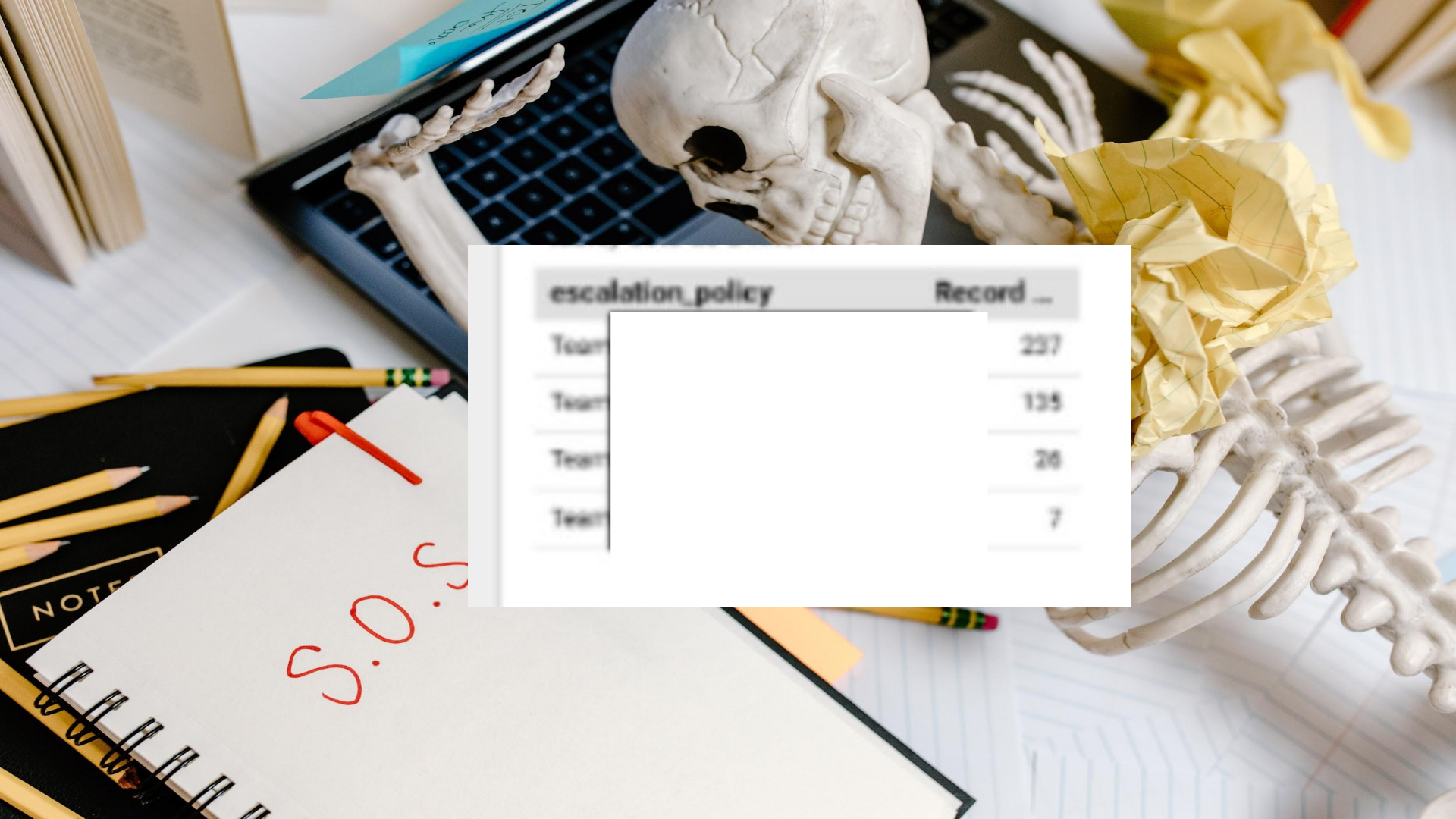


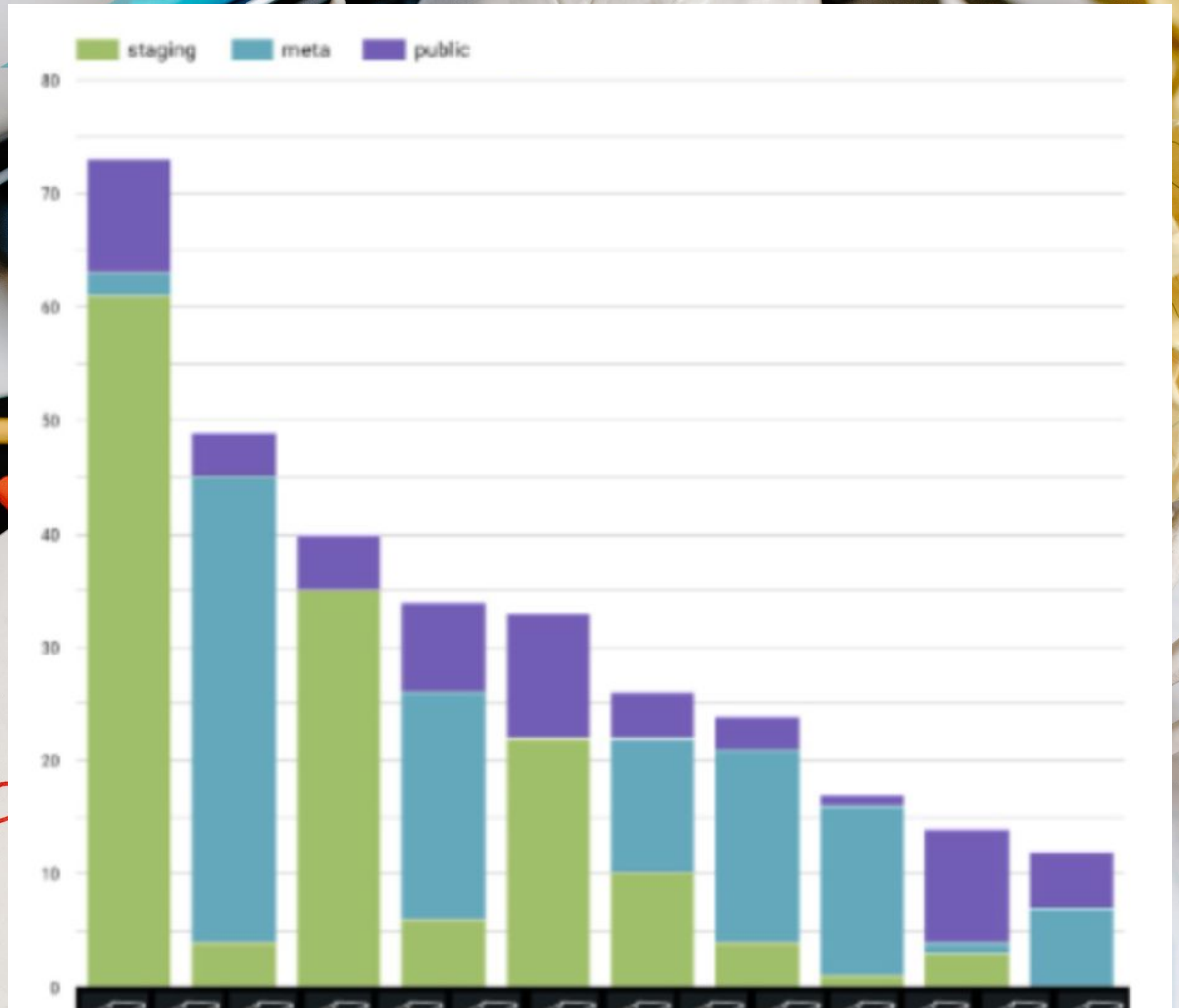
False Positive

E_TOO_MANY_ ALERTS

Alert Triage Dashboard (PagerDuty)
Alert Dashboard (Page 1 of 4)
Tip: Clicking on almost any item in this dashboard (pie chart segment, row of table) acts as a filter!
escalation_policy
Record ...
237
135
26
7
staging
meta
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
Filter by service:

low
high


escalation_policy
Record ...
237
135
26
7
S.O.S


staging
meta
public
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0

03

Burnout

58%

Security and development professionals report **currently experiencing burnout**

S.O.S.

BURNOUT

EXHAUSTION

DEPERSONALIZATION

SELF-INEFFICACY

CYNICISM

04 Tactics

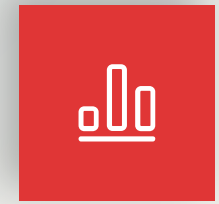
AI/ML is the answer!

NO
the shocker

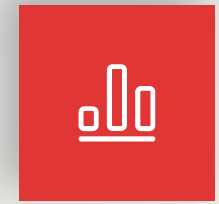
“The human is not a *passive* user of a computer program but is an **active problem-solver** in some world.”

— Dr. David Woods

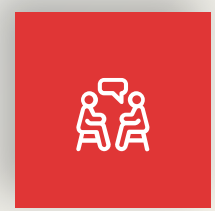
Facts



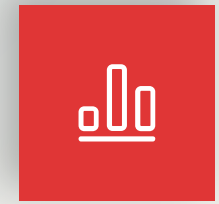
Facts



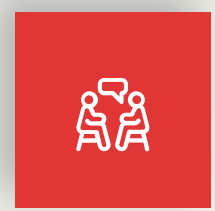
Feels



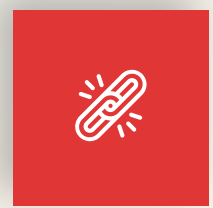
Facts



Feels



Findings



“Ugh. None of the last 5 pages I got were actionable”

- Current primary on-call

Primary has been paged 5 times out of business hours this week

- Pagerduty (the other one)

Team Alpaca is getting frequently paged for non-actionable alerts

– SRE

Gather the data

Survey on-call engineers

Audit your alerts.

Audit your alerts.

All of them.

I *know* things are bad, but just how bad are they?

On-Call Feels Survey Statements/Questions

Strongly Agree || Agree || Undecided || Disagree || Strongly Disagree

- I have been able to get overrides and swaps when needed
- I am able to decline project sprint work and interviews during primary rotation
- I feel confident picking up the pager and going on-call
- I am confident when I am paged the alert will be actionable
- At the end of my primary rotation week I have felt burned out by the demands of on-call
- I am able to dedicate time to proactively improving on-call/production during primary
- I feel my manager has sufficient insight into my on-call duties
- I have been able to get overrides and swaps when needed
- I am able to decline project work and interviews during primary rotation
- I feel confident picking up the pager and going on-call
- I am confident when I am paged the alert will be actionable
- At the end of my primary rotation week I have felt burned out by the demands of on-call
- I am able to dedicate time to proactively improving on-call during primary
- I feel my manager has sufficient insight into my on-call duties

Leadership is skeptical of change

DECEMBER 10, 2021

Day 10 - Assembling Your Year In Review

By: Paige Bernier (@alpacatron3000)
Edited by: Jennifer Davis (@sigje) and Scott Murphy (@ovsage)

INTRO

There are a few moments in my career that I have been struck by a story told with data. When I set out as a Site Reliability Engineer into the big wide world I wanted to capture that data storytelling magic and have adapted a presentation I call the “Year in Review”.

WHAT IS SYSADVENT?

One article for each day of December, ending on the 25th article.

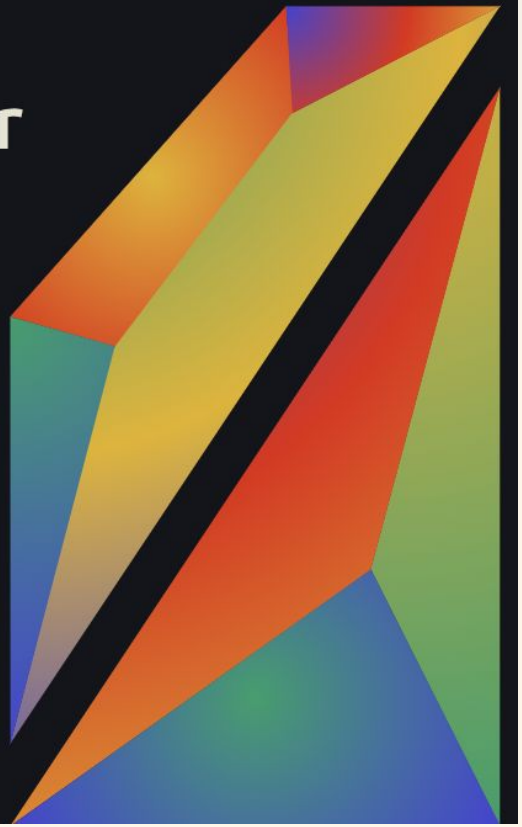
With the goals of sharing, openness, and mentoring, we aim to provide great articles about systems administration topics written by fellow sysadmins.

Want to get involved? Join the mailing list!

No one can agree how to craft a “good” alert

Alert Triage Hour of Power

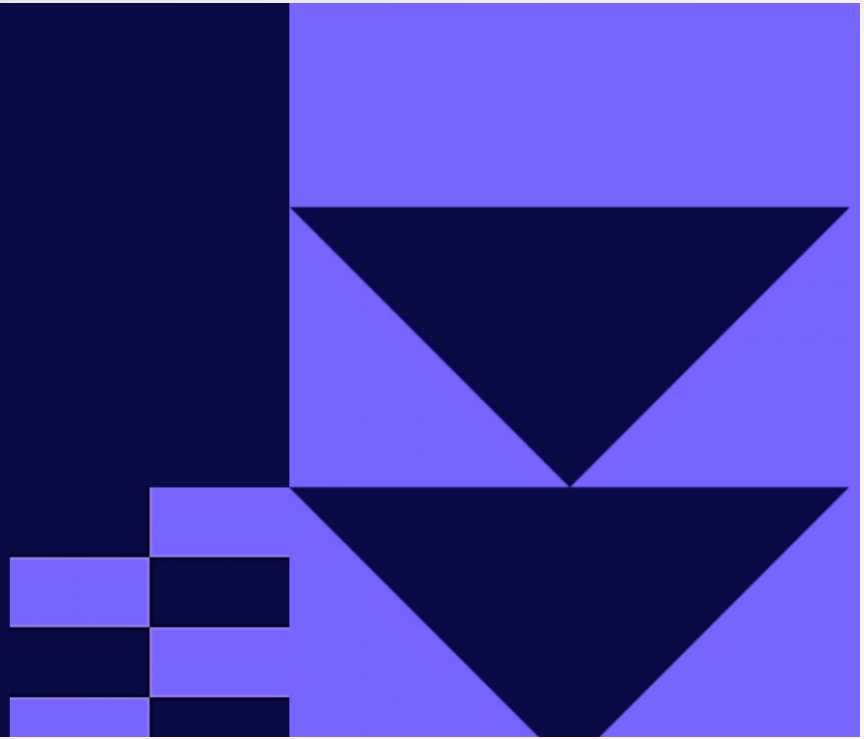
Meeting Intention & Roles	10m
Investigate alert	40m
Wrap up	10m



Love this...do you have a project plan to follow?

How to pay down your monitoring debt

Tech



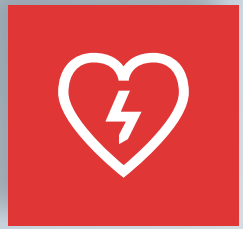
Where can I check my risk for burnout?

Now available in: 🇬🇧 English, 🇪🇸 Español, 🇵🇹 Português

Burnout is real.
But well-being can be real too.

Get your free, anonymous, and science-based burnout assessment and learn what you should do to get to flow.

Check my burnout risk



"Err on the side of removing noisy alerts – **over-monitoring** is a harder problem to solve than under-monitoring."

Rob Ewaschuk

05

Scenario II

Ding!

Ding!

Heads up, there’s smoke in the kitchen

When you are trying to power through your burnout

The Other Side

Your Burnout Risk level is **Low**

🔥 Burnout Index 2.0 by yerbo

This is great! You have a low burnout risk, which is excellent for your **productivity and creativity.** You're probably doing something right, so **share these results and your best practices** with your network and come back in 1 month's time to check for changes.

Upcoming events

May	May	June	June
10	23	7	26
Open Source Summit	Infobip Shift (Miami)	Prometheus Fundamentals Workshop SF	Monitorama

chronosphere

Resources

Alert Triage Hour of Power

How to Pay Down Monitoring Debt

My Philosophy On Alerting

Tackling Alert Fatigue - Catie McCaffrey Monitorama

When to Alert on What?

Yerbo Burnout Index Quiz

Increment: On-Call Issue

Sysadvent: A Year In Review

Addressing Burnout Is Key to Retaining SWE's

On-Call Feels Survey

Questions?

chronosphere