Search the Web for articles on major project failures. Choose one, and answer the following:

a. Describe the project failure, and provide the URL of the website you found it on.
b. What was the cost of the project failure?
c. What were the reasons and consequences of the project failure?

As you respond to each other's posting, consider addressing the following questions:

a. In hindsight how might the project failure have been avoided?
b. What lesson might you learn from this project failure?

Project Deepwater, the Coast Guard's effort to modernize and expand the capability of its fleet, has been getting a lot of attention in recent years as a project failure costing billions of dollars. The <I>New York Times</I> article Billions Later, Plan to Remake the Coast Guard Fleet Stumbles, focuses on a lack of oversight and testing as the primary failings:

<blockquote>
Insufficient oversight by the Coast Guard resulted in the service buying some equipment it did not want and ignoring repeated warnings from its own engineers that the boats and ships were poorly designed and perhaps unsafe...
</blockquote>

The fact that the Coast Guard ended up paying for equipment it did not want is symptomatic of a failure to involve both Owners and Users of the system in defining the project requirements. A system analyst on such a project would have a responsibility to bring Owners and Users into the development process to ensure the end product meets the customer's needs.

The project was also plagued with system failures:

<blockquote>
The VHF radio on the small launch would be exposed to the elements but was not waterproof... The classified communications equipment had not been properly shielded to protect messages from eavesdropping. Cameras intended to provide 360-degree surveillance had two large blind spots.
</blockquote>

Boats that were structurally unsound and radios that weren't waterproofed were just a few examples of a failure to ensure proper testing, which the User stakeholders could have identified early on. However, it's the builders and system analyst who take the most blame on some of these examples, as they fail to meet even the basic requirements.

This project failure stresses the importance of having all stakeholders involved in the project development. Here the Owners removed themselves from the process, leaving builders and designers free reign to interpret requirements as they saw fit. A system analyst involved in such a project would also carry a great deal of the blame, as they would have a responsibility to make the Owners aware that project goals were not being met due to management's lack of involvement.

I remember when NASA lost the Mars Climate Orbiter because one organization was using metric, the other standard. Eventually NASA went fully metric:

http://www.space.com/news/070108_moon_metric.html

In that case, there was a need for standardization, but in your example, there were standards, but they were ignored, which appears to have the same result as not having any standards at all. :)