

EHS Today[®]

Paying It Safe

Salaries and job satisfaction were up for safety professionals in 2025.
So why isn't everybody celebrating? p. 12



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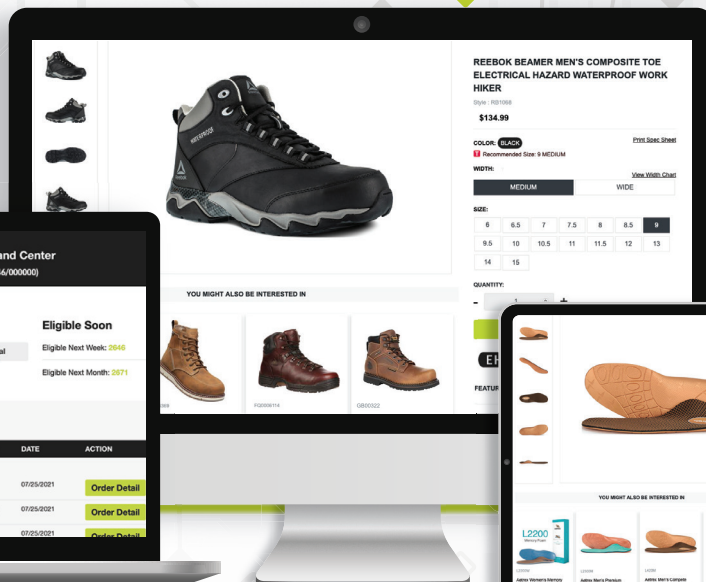
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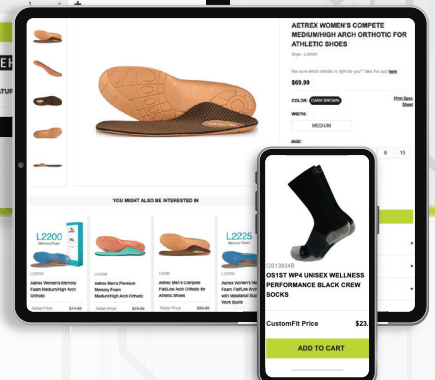
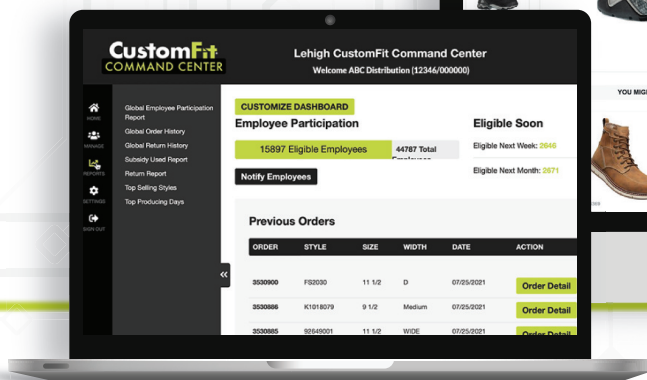
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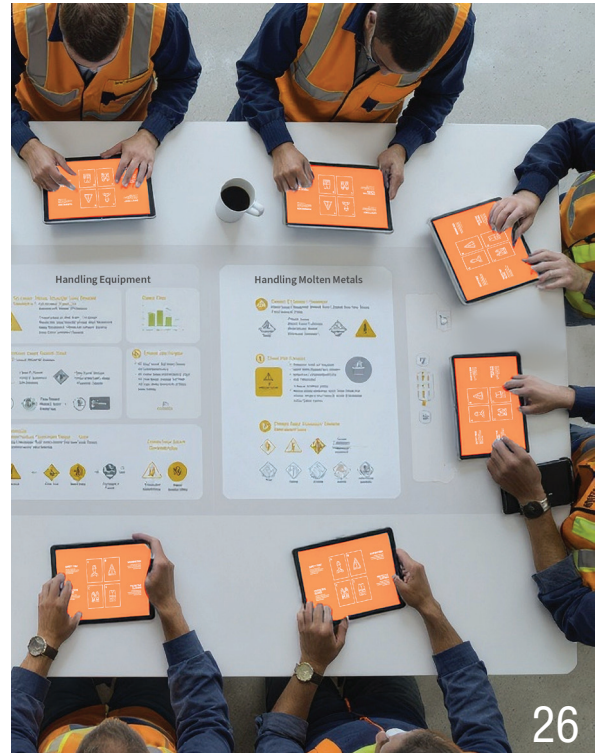
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ON-DEMAND WEBINARS

ITEM: “Safety’s Best Kept Secret: What Exceptional Leaders Do Differently,” presented by DEKRA’s Caroline Johnson and David Musgrave. What separates good safety performance from exceptional results? It’s the leaders who understand that safety isn’t just about systems and procedures—it’s about creating a culture that drives an organization to be great. This webinar looks at the specific skills and behaviors that set outstanding safety leaders apart.

ITEM: “Navigating the Intersection of Sustainability and Artificial Intelligence,” presented by SGS’s Willy Fabritius and Sean McMahon. As AI reshapes industries and transforms business operations, its environmental and social impacts are

under increasing scrutiny. This webinar offers practical insights into how public and private sector organizations can embed sustainability ethics into every stage of the AI lifecycle—from development to deployment to decommissioning.

ITEM: “Safety Masterclass: Addressing the Top Challenges in Safety Programs,” presented by KPA’s Zach Pucillo. This webinar will walk you through practical strategies to strengthen your safety and compliance program, best practices for documenting your compliance efforts, and building a resilient safety and compliance framework. You’ll learn how to effectively interpret and implement regulatory requirements, as well as the true cost of safety incidents, beyond regulatory penalties.

For more details, go to www.ehstoday.com/webinars.

EHS TODAY (USPS Permit 905-040), ISSN 1945-9599 print, ISSN 2771-7267 online is published 4 times per year (Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter) by Endeavor Business Media, LLC, 201 N. Main St. 5th Floor., Fort Atkinson, WI 53538. Periodicals postage paid at Fort Atkinson, WI, and additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to EHS TODAY, PO Box 3257, Northbrook, IL 60065-3257. **SUBSCRIPTIONS:** Publisher reserves the right to reject non-qualified subscriptions. Subscription prices: U.S. \$86.25 per year; Canada/Mexico \$111.25 per year; All other countries \$136.25 per year. All subscriptions are payable in U.S. funds. Send subscription inquiries to EHS Today, PO Box 3257, Northbrook, IL 60065-3257. Customer service can be reached toll-free at 877-382-9187 or at ehstoday@omeda.com for magazine subscription assistance or questions.

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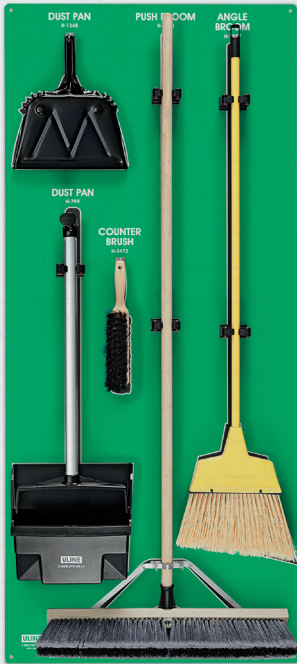
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WET ZONE



DRY ZONE

Dave
Blanchard
Editor-in-Chief



The Incredible Shrinking OSHA

Safety leaders suggest that OSHA should focus on updating standards, enhancing training programs, and applying regulations more broadly to improve workplace safety.

It was emblematic when David Keeling was finally confirmed as the next head of the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) because his confirmation occurred while more than 70% of the federal agency's employees were on furlough due to the government shutdown. Keeling, whose official title is Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health, surely had to sense the irony in his appointment taking place during a work stoppage. Even for somebody like Keeling, whose safety career has been largely spent in logistics (at UPS and Amazon), the wheels of the federal government spin very slowly, when they spin at all.

At this writing, the shutdown is still very much unresolved, but in a larger sense, OSHA has been in something of a holding pattern almost the entire year, along with other federal agencies involved with workplace safety, such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), and National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). Funding for these agencies under the Trump 2.0 administration has been dramatically curtailed (repeating a pattern of cutbacks seen during the first Trump presidency), with the number of employees responsible for the health and safety of the country's workers decreasing significantly.

But in fact, OSHA has been shrinking for years, and actually, for decades. Founded in 1971, by 1980 the federal agency was employing just shy of 3,000 staff (2,951); today that number has dropped to 1,664, a decline of 44% from its peak. Of course, reducing the size of government bureaucracies is often seen by voters as a good thing, which helps explain why politicians frequently target federal agencies as a way to control spending (or more accurately, shift that spending to other government programs).

However, it's telling that as OSHA itself—and particularly, the number of inspectors it employs—has shrunk over the years, the number of workplaces (and workers) it is responsible for has steadily grown. According to an analysis of OSHA employment data conducted by the AFL-CIO, in 1980 there were nearly 15 OSHA inspectors per million

workers; today that number is closer to 6 per million workers, and that ratio is likely to get even smaller if current trends continue.

In the *EHS Today* **2025 National Safety and Salary Survey**, respondents had the chance to weigh in with their thoughts regarding federal (or state, if applicable) OSHA. Following is a sample of their comments:

WHAT'S ONE THING YOU'D MOST LIKE TO SEE OSHA DO MORE OF?

- » Focus more on updating outdated standards to reflect modern work environments, technologies and risks.
- » Enact the heat stress and ergonomics standards.
- » Focus on the bad actors and leave those of us who take safety seriously and have great safety programs alone.
- » Help small businesses grow their safety programs and not be the safety cops.
- » More resources/templates for compliance documents and training.
- » Apply regulations to owners and general contractors rather than just employer/employee relationships.
- » Audit more and increase fines for blatant unsafe conditions.

At his confirmation hearing before the Senate, David Keeling stated that his three main goals at OSHA are to: accelerate the adoption and use of technology and predictive analytics for regulatory oversight and rulemaking; expand cooperation and collaboration between professional groups, companies and unions, while modernizing Voluntary Protection Programs; and transform enforcement through the use of predictive analytics to prevent incidents before they occur.

We wish him well, and we hope that the promise of a more tech-savvy (though smaller) OSHA results in safer workplaces and healthier employees.

Send an e-mail with your thoughts to dblanchard@endeavorb2b.com.

Adrienne
Selko
Senior Editor



Making the Connection: Creating Company Mental Health Advocates

Find your company influencer who creates connections to promote well-being.

There are some people who immediately form connections. Take the case of Stephen Dummit.

"I was speaking about the importance of mental health in the construction industry, and that evening someone from the audience called me to talk about his anxiety and panic about having to work with a teammate on a new job," explains Dummit, founder of Tradewinds Leadership. "Why was he pouring his heart out to me? Wasn't there anyone at the company he could talk to – a teammate, manager, or someone higher up in the company?"

This frantic call hit a nerve for Dummit. "I was an electrician by trade and saw firsthand the disconnect between the training offered to the field versus what was provided to the office side of construction. The mental health of the blue-collar workforce needs to be addressed. These workers have not been given the tools on how to process what they are feeling."

Part of being unable to process feelings is not having connections to those who can provide support. While this might be a particular issue in industrial workplaces, it is a widespread problem that leads to isolation.

The level of isolation in the U.S. has gotten so high that in 2023, then-Surgeon General Dr. Vivek H. Murthy declared it an epidemic and a public health crisis.

Translating the emotional toll to the physical toll, Murthy provided some context. "The mortality impact of being socially disconnected is similar to that caused by smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day, and even greater than that associated with obesity and physical inactivity," he said when announcing the epidemic.

And isolation can hit especially hard in a community where the stigma of expressing feelings is still prevalent. Not only is there fear of talking about mental health, but there is also a fear of repercussions of being open about this issue.

"I come from the industry and never knew how high the rate of suicide was, as well as other mental health issues," said Dummit. According to CDC data, 53 construction workers per 100,000 die by suicide, making it the second-highest rate across all industries.

"And I felt I had to do something about it," said Dummit. So, he added mental health to his training programs. He earned

certifications, including one for Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), which develops suicide first aid skills. It teaches people to recognize when someone may have thoughts of suicide, to discuss suicide directly with that person, and how to intervene and work with the person to create a plan that supports their immediate safety. He also holds one for safeTALK, which helps overcome common barriers like fear and dismissal of suicide, and fosters open conversations about mental health in the community.

These certifications represent the importance of communication around these issues. And companies can find strong communicators within their own workforce. "To find the champions in your organization, look around and identify the person who is most able to influence others," says Dummit. "This is the person who is connected to others and can create a path for others to follow. They can break the stigma that many people have about discussing mental health problems. For many generations, blue-collar workers have been told to stuff their feelings. It's time to end that mentality and instead offer people concrete ways to process these feelings."

Help is available from organizations such as the Construction Industry Alliance for Suicide Prevention, the Associated General Contractors of America and The Center for Construction Research and Training (CPWR), which provide toolbox talks, training and other resources focused on mental health.

With the increase in awareness of the issues and the practical methods to address them, Dummit is optimistic that more methods of communication will push change at a faster rate than we have seen before.

"I believe that if we improve the experience we have at work, we can dramatically improve our lives," says Dummit. "And that improvement starts with how we communicate and connect to one another."

Adrienne Selko

Send an e-mail with your thoughts to aselko@endeavorb2b.com.



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Beyond the Horizon (Part 2): Next-Gen Strategies to Revolutionize Occupational Safety

The future of workplace safety goes beyond technology and will center on smarter, more connected humans.

By Shawn M. Galloway

Building on the foundation of creative frontiers explored in my previous column, the future of workplace safety requires a dynamic infusion of technology, community and even art. These innovative strategies not only aim to prevent injuries but also promote an engaging culture where safety becomes instinctive, enjoyable and deeply embedded in daily work life.

Here's a look at some game-changing ideas shaping the next wave of occupational safety innovations.

1. AUGMENTED REALITY SAFETY TRAINING

What if safety training was no longer a dull lecture but instead an immersive experience? Augmented reality (AR) can transport employees to virtual factory floors or hazardous scenarios where they can practice responding to real-world challenges. By navigating these interactive environments, workers retain knowledge more effectively and gain greater confidence in their safety protocols. Companies like Porsche are pioneering AR training, and expanding this into safety could significantly boost engagement and preparedness.

2. SAFETY GAMIFICATION

Transforming safety adherence into a game can enhance employee motivation. Imagine a mobile app that enables employees to earn points for following safety procedures, completing drills or reporting hazards—similar to earning badges in a fitness or gaming app. This approach encourages friendly competition, reinforces safety behaviors, and makes safety a shared and enjoyable goal for everyone.

3. SENSORY FEEDBACK WEARABLES

The future is wearable. Imagine wristbands or vests equipped with sensors that vibrate or glow when certain hazards are detected, such as entering a high-risk area or when machinery



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exceeds safe operating limits. Already explored by brands like Apple and Fitbit for health, integrating safety alerts into wearables can provide real-time, unobtrusive safety guidance that keeps employees vigilant and protected.

4. CROWDSOURCED SAFETY INNOVATIONS

Employees often possess the best insights regarding on-the-ground risks. A digital platform where staff can submit safety ideas, report hazards or propose solutions—while voting on the most promising ideas—creates

a culture of shared ownership. This approach democratizes safety improvement, empowering workers to lead safety initiatives and fostering innovation from within the team.

5. INTERACTIVE SAFETY ART INSTALLATIONS

How about transforming safety messages into engaging art? Interactive murals that change colors based on safety violation reports or art installations that depict workers' safety stories can make safety culture more memorable. Art serves as a catalyst for conversation and reflection, embedding safety into the fabric of daily work life.

6. NATURE-INSPIRED SAFETY ZONES

Research indicates that natural environments reduce stress and enhance focus. Designating areas with plants, water features or natural light—akin to a peaceful garden—can serve as mindfulness and safety checkpoints. These spaces subtly remind employees to stay alert while promoting mental well-being in the workplace.

7. SAFETY MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS

Learning from experienced workers builds trust and retention. Pairing new hires with seasoned mentors who focus on safety fosters real-world knowledge transfer, open dialogue and

shared responsibility. Such relationships humanize safety, creating a supportive environment where concerns can be voiced and lessons shared.

8. VIRTUAL REALITY STRESS TESTS

High-stress situations are difficult to replicate in real life. Virtual reality (VR) can simulate emergency scenarios, such as fires or equipment failures, and allow employees to practice decision-making under pressure in a safe environment. This immersive preparation enhances confidence, resilience and quick response times.

9. SAFETY STORYTELLING CIRCLES

Communicating personal safety stories connects people through shared experiences. Regular storytelling sessions foster openness and facilitate learning from near-misses or accidents, transforming safety from a checklist into a communal narrative that reinforces lessons and cultivates a resilient safety culture.

10. AI-DRIVEN HAZARD PREDICTION

Leveraging AI to analyze workplace data may be the ultimate proactive safety tool. By examining trends in machinery performance, environmental conditions and worker reports,

AI can predict potential hazards before they occur—similar to predictive maintenance—providing teams the opportunity to intervene early and prevent incidents.

FINAL THOUGHTS: INNOVATE, ENGAGE, ELEVATE

Each of these forward-looking strategies exemplifies how technology, art and community can collaborate to reshape safety into an engaging, instinctive aspect of organizational culture. This goes beyond compliance; it's about cultivating an environment where safety excellence is natural, continuous and collaborative.

The future of occupational safety isn't just about smarter systems; it's about smarter, more connected humans. Embrace these innovations to lead your organization into a new era of safety where prevention, engagement and culture thrive side by side. **EHS**



SHAWN M. GALLOWAY

Shawn M. Galloway is CEO of ProAct Safety; host of the podcast, "Safety Culture Excellence"; and a past keynote speaker at EHS Today's Safety Leadership Conference.

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NEWS BEAT



EHS Investments Drive Company Business Value

EY survey found that 81% of EHS leaders say their EHS initiatives have contributed to increased commercial value.

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Companies that invest in environment, health and safety initiatives may have a competitive advantage in a volatile world, according to a recent EY survey, “The 2025 EY Global EHS Maturity Study.”

The survey concludes that investment in EHS helps drive organizations’ commercial value by delivering reputational, resilience and efficiency benefits. This conclusion was underpinned by the fact that 81% of EHS leaders say their EHS initiatives have contributed to increased commercial value.

Other findings include:

- » EHS leaders are more likely to say that investment in EHS initiatives has reduced costs during unexpected disruptions (73% compared with 64% of other respondents).
- » They are also more likely to believe their organization’s EHS approach has resulted in marked improvements in operational efficiency (94% compared with 73% of other respondents).
- » And 86% of organizations say that their EHS platform has enhanced their ability to mitigate risks and improve incident prediction and prevention.

Here are some key recommendations from the study:

- » **Embed EHS into the organization’s value creation story:** Align EHS initiatives with the organization’s broader vision and objectives to achieve reputational, operational

and resilience benefits, which will drive commercial value. EHS should be treated as integral to long-term business success, not just risk management.

- » **Harness the full potential of digital technologies:** To truly enhance EHS performance, invest in technologies that integrate with enterprise risk management systems and make strategic use of data. Scaling investments in digital systems, advanced data analytics and AI can result in real-time, actionable insights that allow organizations to anticipate incidents before they occur.
- » **Build a culture of accountability:** Ensure that EHS is everyone’s responsibility by integrating it into job descriptions and governance processes. Prioritize open and transparent two-way communication and share knowledge internally and within industry ecosystems.
- » **Foster collaboration:** Promote cross-functional teamwork between EHS, sustainability, HR and risk teams to enhance organizational value. When an EHS culture is deeply embedded within an organization, the central EHS function can operate under less pressure.
- » **Measure and improve:** Clearly articulate the desired outcomes from EHS investment and then determine how those outcomes can and will be measured to track progress and demonstrate ROI. Then use insights from measurement to continuously refine strategies and inform future investment decisions. —EHS Today Staff

Psychological Safety Policies Missing at Companies

Just 16% say their organization currently has a written psychological safety policy, and just 36% say the term is formally defined and communicated internally.

P psychological safety is a concept so important to employee health that it's included in ISO 45003 and increasingly employees are rating it as a necessary factor in terms of engagement.

A recent survey, "The Status of Psychological Safety in the Workplace," from Veriforce, found a disconnect between understanding the importance of psychological safety (68%) and the need to have a specific policy. Just 16% say their organization currently has a written psychological safety policy, and just 36% say the term is formally defined and communicated internally.

More than half (52%) report that their company lacks formal training or workshops on psychological safety.

Nearly 1 in 5 (19%) say their leadership does not actively promote or model psychologically safe behaviors. Leadership support emerged as another critical factor. The data revealed a strong correlation ($r = 0.68$) between employees' perceptions of leadership's commitment to psychological safety and their comfort in raising concerns. This emphasizes leaders' central role in shaping a transparent safety culture.

"High-risk industries, where voicing concerns can prevent harm, need to move beyond awareness and embed the right leadership behaviors, policies and training to dismantle cultures of silence," said James Junkin, Strategic Advisory Board Chair at Veriforce, in a statement.

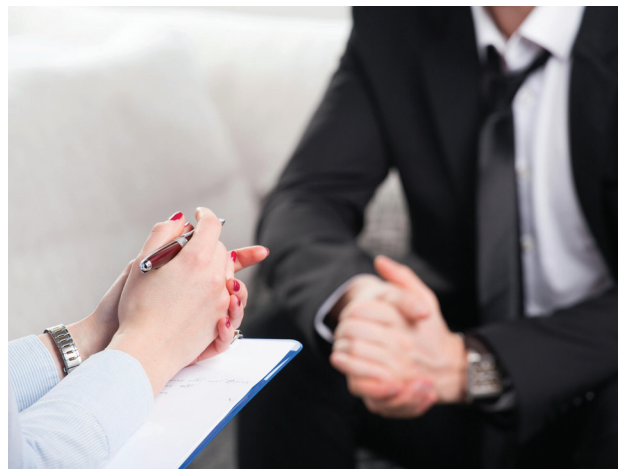
COMMON BARRIERS IDENTIFIED

Respondents also cited several barriers to establishing or improving psychological safety, including:

- » Fear of retribution or negative consequences (40%),
- » Lack of management buy-in or inconsistent leadership behaviors (30%),
- » Production pressure outweighing safety priorities (25%), and
- » Poor communication channels or a lack of clear feedback (20%).

METRICS ON TRAINING AND SUPPORT FAVOR POLICIES

The research also found that formal training has a measurable impact on employees' comfort levels to speak up. Those



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at companies with formal training on psychological safety reported an average comfort score of 4 out of 5, compared to 3.2 in companies without.

Leadership support emerged as another critical factor. The data revealed a strong correlation ($r = 0.68$) between employees' perceptions of leadership's commitment to psychological safety and their comfort in raising concerns. This emphasizes leaders' central role in shaping a transparent safety culture.

Addressing these barriers requires nonpunitive reporting systems, confidential feedback channels, and rethinking incentives that prioritize productivity over well-being.

For safety professionals, procurement leads, and contractors, particularly in high-risk sectors, this report indicates an urgent need to give psychological safety the same priority as physical safety.

"Psychological safety isn't just a cultural issue, but a practical one," added Junkin. "If people don't feel safe raising concerns or challenging decisions, companies won't get the full picture on critical risks facing their organizations. Those taking this issue seriously and investing in psychological safety are building safer, more resilient operations. It's not about adding another layer of compliance but about enabling the kind of communication that keeps people safe and organizations resilient." —EHS Today Staff

Paying It Safe

Salaries and job satisfaction were up for safety professionals in 2025.

So why isn't everybody celebrating?

By Dave Blanchard

The results are in from *EHS Today's 2025 National Safety and Salary Survey*, so rather than burying the lead let's cut to the chase: The average salary for a safety professional rose 12% over the past year. That's quite a bit higher than the typical raise throughout the US economy in 2025, so it could be taken as a sign that occupational health and safety has taken on a more prominent role in the workplace. And perhaps that's true, but the anecdotal comments passed on by the 662 respondents to the survey tell a somewhat different story.

When asked to name one thing they would like to change about their job, 9% of those who answered said they'd want a higher salary, and 13% said they'd like more help. That continues a theme we've heard time and again in our annual surveys, the notion that safety professionals are overworked and underpaid.

Indeed, at many companies the head of safety is, in fact, a manager without a staff, as 43% of survey respondents said they do not have any direct reports. That's a crucial point when you consider how many areas of the company a typical safety professional is responsible for. According to our survey, at least half indicated they're responsible for the following: safety (95%), occupational health (72%), emergency management (67%), risk management (67%), ergonomics (63%), industrial hygiene (59%), fire protection (58%), and environmental compliance/ESG (57%).

With all that on their plates, though, safety professionals aren't likely to see much help coming any time soon: two-thirds (67%) of respondents said their company's budget for EHS has stayed the same in 2025 as it was in 2024; only 21% saw an increase, and 12% actually saw the budget go down.

Based on all the numbers we've crunched to compile the survey results, we can reveal what a typical (though mythical) safety leader looks like: a white male in his 50s, who lives in the Midwest, works in a manufacturing plant or facility, has more than 20 years of experience in the EHS field, earns \$118,697, and did not receive a bonus last year.

COMMENTS SUBMITTED BY RESPONDENTS TO THE 2025 NATIONAL SAFETY AND SALARY SURVEY

- "The safety industry today is at a crossroads. On one hand, we have better tools, technology and data than ever before to prevent injuries and protect workers. On the other hand, we face real challenges in how safety is prioritized, perceived and regulated."
- "Exciting developments in our profession include adapting to utilizing AI and other leading-edge technologies to improve efficiency and service to our industries."
- "This profession sounded amazing, but in reality companies are cheap, only care about production, and dirty."
- "I am lucky to be working at the company that I work for. They truly embrace safety and value the safety of their colleagues over production."
- "The EHS regulatory environment needs to be more cost-effective and make sense for manufacturing and industry. Environmental social justice groups are a waste of time, money and resources."
- "Salaries on job postings seem to match the salaries from 10 years ago. This is making it harder to attract and keep high-potential employees, causing the profession to settle for low-tier performers."
- "My job is very fulfilling and more of a calling than a profession."

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The term "safety leader" is something of a misnomer since few if any safety professionals actually have that as their title. Manager, supervisor, director, vice president—these are more likely to appear on a safety professional's business card or LinkedIn page. Based on our survey results, the largest group of respondents (31%) consider themselves an EHS manager/supervisor, and earn an average salary of \$111,664. The second largest group are EHS professionals (25% of respondents), who earn \$102,154, followed by EHS directors/VPs (18%), who earn \$161,036.



The majority of safety professionals work in manufacturing, either light manufacturing industries (e.g., apparel, consumer electronics) or heavy manufacturing (e.g., automotive, aerospace), which together account for 28% of all respondents. Light manufacturing (16%) salaries average \$98,960, while heavy manufacturing (12%) salaries average \$111,740. In between those two industries, however, are construction safety professionals, who make up 14% of the total and average \$109,139.

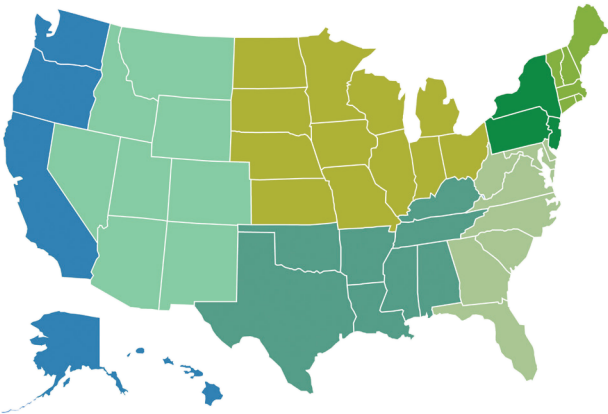
It stands to reason, then, that the largest percentage of safety professionals work at a manufacturing plant or facility (35%),

with another 9% working at a worksite or construction site. However, 30% work in a corporate office, and 8% work in a government office or lab. So a safety professional is just as likely to be where production or construction work is being done as they are in an office setting.

CONTINENTAL DIVIDE

When it comes to salaries for safety professionals, where you live can oftentimes play a large factor in how well you're compensated, and it could also be reflected in how

AVERAGE SALARY BY GEOGRAPHIC REGION	
Region (% of response)	Salary
Middle Atlantic (NJ, NY, PA) (10%)	\$131,020
Mountain (AZ, CO, ID, MT, NM, NV, UT, WY) (8%)	\$134,013
New England (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT) (4%)	\$117,131
North Central (IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, SD, WI) (30%)	\$110,962
Pacific (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA) (11%)	\$122,161
South Atlantic (DC, DE, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV) (19%)	\$117,245
South Central (AL, AR, KY, LA, MS, OK, TN, TX) (15%)	\$123,261
Other North America (2%)	\$84,267



AVERAGE SALARY BY INDUSTRY	
Industry sector (% of response)	Salary
Chemicals (6%)	\$129,221
Construction (15%)	\$123,204
Consulting (5%)	\$126,346
Education (5%)	\$94,039
Food & Beverage (7%)	\$111,521
Forestry & Agriculture (1%)	\$85,902
Government (8%)	\$105,105
Heavy Manufacturing (13%)	\$118,333
Insurance (2%)	\$145,682
Light Manufacturing (13%)	\$106,366
Medical/Healthcare/Pharmaceutical (4%)	\$125,822
Oil & Gas (3%)	\$134,771
Research/Technology (2%)	\$149,491
Retail (1%)	\$96,800
Transportation (1%)	\$83,400
Utilities (3%)	\$153,444
Warehousing/Distribution/Logistics (4%)	\$119,186
Other (e.g., Hospitality, Mining, Waste/Recycling, etc.) (7%)	\$121,488

much in demand safety professionals are in that region. For instance, the least populated area of the country—the mountain region—has the largest average salary for safety leaders: \$134,020. However, before you jump to conclusions and start packing your hiking gear to move out west, we should point out the most densely populated area—the Middle Atlantic—has the second-largest average salary, at \$131,020.

By far the largest number of safety professionals live in the North Central region, aka the Midwest, accounting for 30% of the total. However, that’s also the area with the lowest average salary in the US, at \$110,962.

SAFETY SMARTS

Safety professionals aren’t by nature early adopters of the latest technologies, so it’s not surprising that the most frequently adopted safety tech are safety management systems (56%), which are not only a tried-and-true solution but are heavily promoted by OSHA; the agency, in fact, has established an SMS for its own federal employees.

The only other technology that at least half the respondents said they’re using is e-learning/micro-learning, which is primarily used for training purposes.

Interestingly, while most of the tech usage results closely mirrored the same usage percentages from a year ago, one tech doubled in usage—artificial intelligence (AI), which jumped from 12% in 2024 to 24% in 2025. When it comes to identifying exactly how AI can help improve safety outcomes, the jury is still out on whether that’ll be on the predictive or the

AVERAGE SALARY BY JOB RESPONSIBILITY	
Position (% of response)	Salary
Consultant/Academic (5%)	\$119,955
Corporate/Executive/Senior Management (4%)	\$140,282
EHS Director/VP (18%)	\$161,036
EHS Manager/Supervisor (31%)	\$111,664
EHS Professional (25%)	\$102,154
EHS&S (Sustainability) Professional (5%)	\$112,556
HR Manager (2%)	\$91,727
Industrial Hygienist (1%)	\$117,665
Operations/Plant Manager (2%)	\$136,682
Risk Manager (2%)	\$106,669
Training Manager (1%)	\$71,351
Other (Engineering, Quality, Administration, etc.) (5%)	\$92,452

prescriptive side, but it’s clear that the frequent hype over AI has resulted in one out of four safety professionals giving the technology a try.

WIDENING GAPS

Every year we also take a look at the gender gap, to see if anything has changed since the previous survey. The answer is yes, but not in a good way: in 2024, males made up 67% of the safety profession vs. 31% females (3% preferred not to say). This year, 71% of the respondents were male, and 28% female (1% preferred not to say). In terms of average salaries, males outearned females by \$10,649. In 2024, the difference was \$5,472, so the salary gap almost doubled over the past year.

Not much changed over the past year when it comes to ethnic diversity, either. This year, just like last year, 81% of all respondents described themselves as Whites/Caucasians, and the average salary for this group was \$121,066. The next-largest group—Hispanic/Latino—accounts for 7% (down from 8% in 2024), with an average salary of \$99,241, a difference of more than \$20,000 from their White counterparts.

TAKE THIS JOB AND LOVE IT

As noted above, the largest percentage of survey respondents have more than 20 years of experience in the EHS field (42%). In fact, 71% have more than 10 years of experience, which suggests that safety leaders tend to remain in the EHS profession for most, if not all, of their careers. And the survey results bear that out. When asked if they are satisfied with their choice of EHS as a career path,

WHAT TYPES OF TECHNOLOGIES ARE YOU USING TO IMPROVE SAFETY OUTCOMES?	
Safety management systems	56%
E-learning / micro-learning	54%
Mobile devices	36%
Artificial intelligence	24%
Predictive analytics	11%
Wearables	11%
Robots	7%
Drones / autonomous vehicles	6%
Localization technology	5%
Sensors in PPE/apparel	4%
Exoskeletons	3%
Virtual reality / augmented reality	2%

AVERAGE SALARY BY GENDER	
Gender (% of response)	Salary
Female (28%)	\$110,838
Male (71%)	\$121,487
Prefer not to say (1%)	\$140,500

FOR WHICH OF THESE AREAS DO YOU HAVE RESPONSIBILITY?	
Area of responsibility	% of response
Emergency management	67%
Environmental compliance/ESG	57%
Ergonomics	63%
Fire protection	58%
Industrial hygiene	59%
Occupational health	72%
Risk management	67%
Safety	95%
Security	29%
Wellness	26%
Workers’ compensation	42%

AVERAGE SALARY BY ETHNIC BACKGROUND	
Ethnic background (% of response)	Salary
Asian or Pacific Islander (2%)	\$92,287
Black/African-American (4%)	\$106,936
Hispanic/Latino (7%)	\$99,241
Native American or Alaska Native (1%)	\$115,000
White/Caucasian (81%)	\$121,066
Other/Prefer not to say (5%)	\$125,521

AVERAGE SALARY BY AGE	
Age (% of response)	Salary
18-24 (1%)	\$62,500
25-34 (9%)	\$93,933
35-44 (13%)	\$115,384
45-54 (25%)	\$113,226
55-64 (35%)	\$129,431
65 and older (17%)	\$121,897

AVERAGE SALARY BY EXPERIENCE	
Years in EHS field (% of response)	Salary
Less than 5 (10%)	\$84,107
5-10 (19%)	\$108,246
11-15 (15%)	\$108,824
16-20 (14%)	\$117,926
More than 20 (42%)	\$135,735

WHAT IS YOUR HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION?	
Level of education (% of response)	Salary
High school (4%)	\$82,036
Some college (13%)	\$97,898
2-year degree (9%)	\$110,445
4-year degree (37%)	\$115,955
Some graduate study (7%)	\$116,308
Master's degree (29%)	\$140,500
Doctorate (1%)	\$113,171

HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH YOUR CURRENT JOB?	
Satisfaction level	% of response
Very satisfied	33%
Satisfied	45%
Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	14%
Unsatisfied	6%
Very unsatisfied	2%

HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH EHS AS A CAREER PATH?	
Satisfaction level	% of response
Very satisfied	45%
Satisfied	37%
Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	15%
Unsatisfied	2%
Very unsatisfied	0.001%

DESCRIBE YOUR WORK ENVIRONMENT	
Environment	% of response
Plant/facility	35%
Corporate staff	30%
Worksite/construction site	9%
Government office/laboratory	8%
Division staff	6%
Educational institution	5%
Other (Consulting, Healthcare, Utilities, etc.)	7%

AVERAGE SALARY BY STAFF SIZE	
Number of employees you manage (% of response)	Salary
0 (43%)	\$106,764
1-9 (38%)	\$124,951
10-19 (7%)	\$143,578
20-49 (4%)	\$140,501
50-99 (3%)	\$128,308
100-249 (3%)	\$118,500
More than 249 (1%)	\$111,086

45% said they are very satisfied (an increase of 4% from last year’s survey), and another 37% said they are satisfied, for a total of 82% on the satisfaction-meter. Only 2% said they are unsatisfied, and only one respondent to the survey said they’re very unsatisfied.

The satisfaction-meter is nearly as strong when asked how satisfied they are with their current job. Despite all the challenges and concerns raised in their comments, respondents overall are quite comfortable with their situations, with 33% saying they are very satisfied with their current job (a jump of 8% from last year’s survey), and another 45% are satisfied, for a satisfaction factor of 78%. The “unsatisfieds” (6%) and “very unsatisfieds” (2%) added up to 8%, a slight drop from last year’s 9%.

That’s not to say that everybody is perfectly content with their jobs or where the safety profession stands at the moment, especially in an era where seemingly every aspect of our daily work lives is being politicized. When we asked if they thought the Trump administration would have a positive effect on workplace safety, 42% of respondents said no, 26% said yes, and 32% said they didn’t know. In an area characterized by polarizing uncertainty, that’s pretty close to an even split between those discouraged, those encouraged and those just plain baffled by what’s going on in Washington. But maybe that’s always the case.

In any event, our thanks to all the safety professionals who took the time to answer the survey and offer us their candid commentary. You can go to ehstoday.com to find even more charts and comments, as this article offers just a sampling from the full survey results. And thank you to each and every one of you for the often unheralded but always fantastic job you do to keep all of us safe. We appreciate you! **EHS**

THE REST OF THE STORY

You can find more salary information and insights from the **2025 National Safety and Salary Survey** at the ehstoday.com website.

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FACING THE SAFETY PROFESSION TODAY?

- Buy-in from ownership.
- Buy-in from employees.
- Too many regulations.
- Balancing safety and productivity.
- The Trump administration.
- Complacency.
- Lack of qualified personnel.
- Doing more with less.
- Budget cuts and lack of spending.
- Bridging the gap between Baby Boomers and Millennials.
- Keeping up with the rapidly evolving technological advances.
- ESG and DEI programs.
- C-suite does not understand the return on investment in employee safety.
- Burnout.



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One Step Ahead: A Safety Manager's Guide to Protective Footwear

*Safety footwear is a critical line of defense
from slips, trips and falls.*

By Leigh Stadelmeier

Nonslip outsoles

REFRIGIWEAR

Every day, millions of workers lace up their boots, counting on them to provide safety and comfort from punch in to punch out. But when the wrong footwear walks onto the jobsite, it brings preventable injuries with it.

Safety managers play a critical role in selecting protective footwear that matches the demands of the job. Knowing which features to prioritize and how they're regulated can help prevent injuries, reduce downtime and support compliance.

WHO SETS THE STANDARDS?

OSHA sets the baseline requirements for workplace safety, including safety footwear. For construction, general industry, and food processing, OSHA mandates compliance with ASTM International standards—specifically ASTM F2413, which governs safety toe boots.

Footwear that meets ASTM requirements is certified by an independent lab, which issues a Certificate of Conformance. This certification allows the product to carry labels showing the ASTM safety specifications it meets.

Ultimately, employers are responsible for selecting proper footwear and ensuring it's worn consistently, whether they provide the boots or workers supply their own.

READING THE LABELS: WHAT SAFETY FEATURES MEAN

The ASTM F2413-24 standard was revised in 2024 to include updated test methods, slip resistance criteria and more transparent labeling. The following explains ASTM ratings and labels for safety features most commonly required in general industry, construction, manufacturing and food processing.

I/C: Impact & Compression Ratings for Safety Toe Caps

Safety toe caps protect workers' feet from impact and compression injuries. Impact injuries might come from falling objects, such as a fumbled tool or dropped materials. Compression injuries come from roll-over accidents, such as equipment or a vehicle wheel rolling over the foot.

ASTM F2413-24 details the standard requirements for safety toe caps. Work boots that meet ASTM F2413-24 specifications will be marked with "I/C" to indicate that the toe cap is capable of withstanding an impact force of 75lbf and withstanding a compressive force of 2,500lbf (at a minimum) and retaining a 1/2 inch clearance for men and a 15/32 inch clearance for women.

It's important to note that the ASTM standard doesn't require the toe cap to be made of a specific material. Steel,

aluminum and composite toe caps can all provide the necessary protection.

Steel toes are the strongest and the most popular among construction workers, who are at greater risk for impact and compression injuries. Aluminum toes are lighter than steel and can be a good choice for industrial and warehouse workers. Composite safety toes are the lightest and are the preferred choice for cold storage and temperature-controlled food processing workers because composites don't conduct cold as well as steel or aluminum. Hence, the feet stay warmer while walking on frozen surfaces.

SR & SRO: Slip Resistance Ratings

Slip resistant outsoles protect workers from injury by making it easier to stay upright on challenging terrain. Such outsoles provide more secure traction against uneven, wet or debris-filled surfaces because they are made with specialized materials, such as rubber compounds, that grip the ground. The treads are molded with multi-directional patterns of varying sizes or depths that increase traction and channel any moisture around the foot as it contacts the ground or floor.

Slip resistance is incorporated into the ASTM F2413-24 standard and evaluates footwear performance in terms of its coefficient of friction (COF), the numerical measurement of traction between the boot and the floor. The

higher the number, the better the traction and the less likely the wearer is to slip.

When a retailer or distributor says that a boot is "nonslip" or "slip-resistant," check that the boot has been tested using officially accepted ASTM test methodologies by looking for an ASTM slip resistance rating on the label.

Work boots labeled with ASTM F2413-24 and the term "SR" have a COF of 0.4 or greater on wet and dry surfaces. Work boots labeled with the term "SRO" meet the requirements for the SR rating, plus they have a COF of at least 0.33 on oily and wet surfaces.

PR: Puncture Plate Protection

Walking on an active jobsite can feel like crossing a minefield due to the nails, blades and sharp-edged scrap metal just waiting to stab the soles of unwitting workers.

Work boots with an extra plate of steel, durable rubber or other protective material between the insole and outsole can protect against this type of puncture injury. Such footwear will be labeled with ASTM F2413-24 and "PR" to show that the outsole can withstand 270lbf of force.

MT: Metatarsal Protection

Metatarsal guards protect the top of the foot and must maintain 1 inch of clearance under a 75 lbf impact. These "Mt" rated boots are best for environments where larger objects may fall or swing onto the foot.

EH: Electrical Hazard Protection

Footwear labeled "EH" contains nonconductive materials and is recommended for general use to protect against accidental contact with open circuits up to 600 volts in dry conditions.

SD: Static Dissipative

"SD"-rated boots help prevent static buildup in sensitive environments, such as electronics manufacturing or flammable material handling. The number that appears after "SD" (either 10, 35 or 100) specifies the upper limit of electrical resistance against which the footwear has been certified.

BEYOND COMPLIANCE: KEY COMFORT AND DURABILITY FEATURES

ASTM compliance handles protection, but a well-rounded footwear program also considers comfort and durability.

Anti-fatigue Insoles

Jobs requiring long hours on the feet can lead to chronic fatigue or musculoskeletal issues. Look for insoles with arch support, multilayer shock absorption, moisture-wicking liners, and insoles with gel or air-cushioned pads at pressure points to help reduce impact on joints.

Waterproofing

Wet feet are more than uncomfortable; they're dangerous. Prolonged exposure to moisture can result in trench foot, blisters and infections.

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FOOT PROTECTION

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ASTM F2413-24

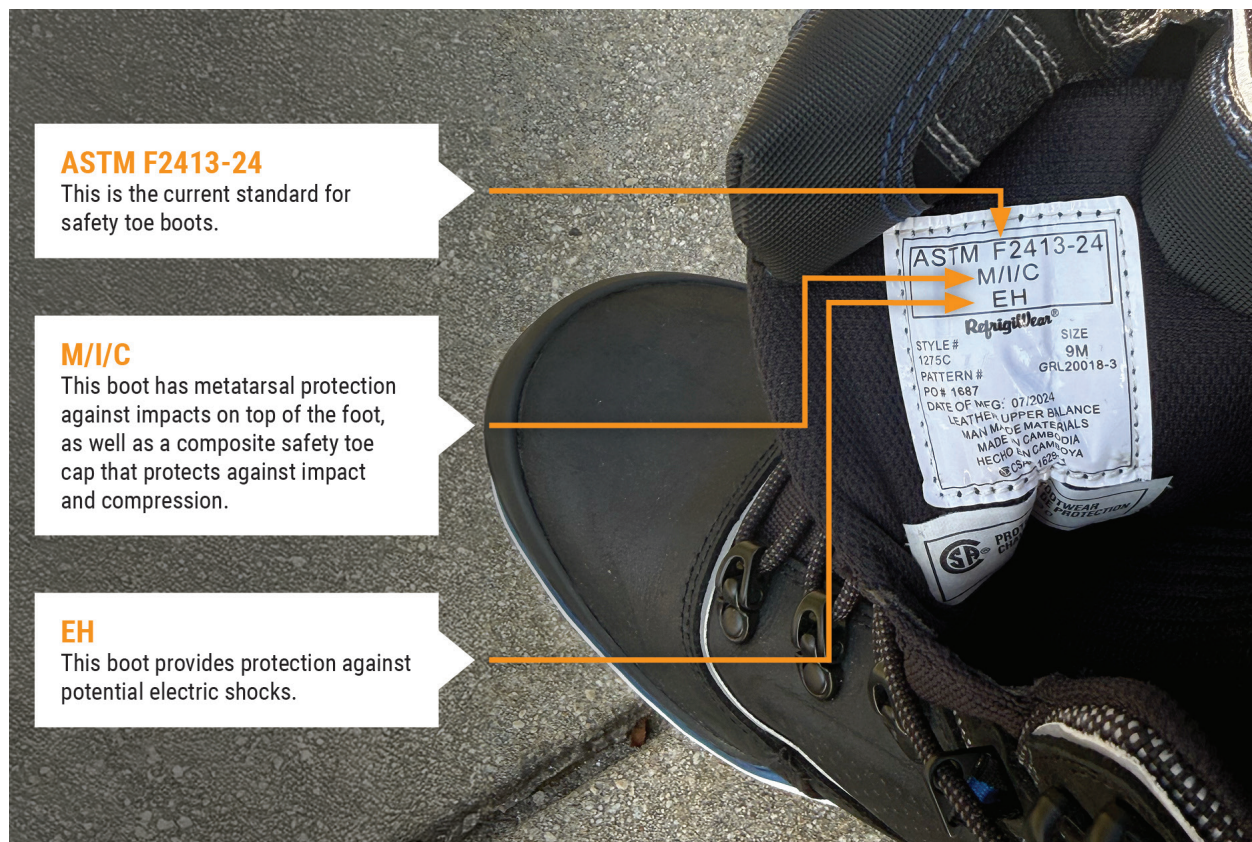
This is the current standard for safety toe boots.

M/I/C

This boot has metatarsal protection against impacts on top of the foot, as well as a composite safety toe cap that protects against impact and compression.

EH

This boot provides protection against potential electric shocks.



ASTM certifications appear on a label on the tongue of the boot.

Choose boots with bonded or glued construction rather than welted to limit water entry. Consider uppers made from synthetic materials, such as nylon or Kevlar, which resist moisture and require less maintenance than leather.

Insulation

Cold environments call for insulated boots, but not too insulated. Overheating leads to sweating, which increases the risk of frostbite and other cold-related injuries.

Use ambient temperature and activity level to choose insulation density, typically labeled in grams (gsm). For extreme cold, pac boots with thick insulation and rubberized exteriors are ideal.

BUILDING A SMART FOOTWEAR PROGRAM

Selecting the right boots is just the start. A smart safety footwear program ensures that boots are worn, maintained and replaced at the right times.

Focus on Fit

As of 2024, OSHA explicitly requires proper fit for PPE, including safety footwear. Ill-fitting boots increase injury risk and reduce compliance, so ask vendors for inclusive sizing and fit guides. Consider on-site fittings to ensure each employee gets the right fit.

Field-test Before You Commit

Use field trials to get feedback from workers about real-world performance. Do the boots flex and pivot as needed? Is the boot height supportive without being restrictive? Engaging workers early helps ensure buy-in and long-term compliance.

Replace Worn Footwear Proactively

Work boots and safety shoes don't expire, but even the most durable footwear won't last forever. Keep safety boots in good shape or their protective features can be compromised. Build boot replacement cycles into your safety planning; don't wait for injuries to trigger an audit.

SAFETY STARTS FROM THE GROUND UP

Slips, trips and falls are still among the most common and preventable workplace injuries. Safety footwear is a critical line of defense, offering traction, impact resistance and support to keep crews safe.

An effective footwear program isn't just about compliance; it's about building a culture of safety. Equipping workers with the right boots will improve their ability to stay focused, productive and on their feet. **EHS**

Leigh Stadelmeier is an authorized OSHA outreach trainer and vice president of outdoor sales for RefrigiWear, a provider of industrial insulated workwear, safety apparel and personal protective equipment (PPE) for extreme cold work environments.

How to Rebuild a Safety Culture from Scratch

Learn how to stabilize a safety program when you're dropped into chaos.

By Meghna Chaudhary

No training. No hand over. No binder. Just a title and a desk—and sometimes, not even that!

For many EHS professionals, the job doesn't start with a smooth onboarding plan or a detailed turnover binder. It starts with a mess.

You walk onto a site with outdated procedures, expired training records, missing hazard assessments, and a workforce that's either indifferent or hostile to anything labeled "safety." Worse, sometimes you don't even know what's broken, because no one has been paying attention long enough to document it.

Many of us have been there.

This article is not a checklist or a polished framework. It's a field guide for EHS professionals who've been dropped into chaos, whether that's post-OSHA inspection, following leadership turnover, or stepping into a site where EHS was never a priority to begin with.

It's a guide to help you stabilize, rebuild and lead with confidence, even when you have nothing but grit to go on.

START WITH STABILITY, NOT STRATEGY

The first instinct many new EHS leaders have is to start designing programs, updating policies or launching training campaigns. Resist that urge. Your first job is to stabilize the system, not overhaul it.

Spend your first week on the floor. Listen more than you speak. Learn how things are actually done, not how they're supposed to be done. Ask questions like:

- » What parts of the job feel most dangerous?
- » What issues have people stopped reporting because nothing gets fixed?
- » When was the last time someone actually used this emergency shower?

The reality is, every site has skeletons in the closet. You can't fix what you don't see. So, before you bring in new rules, fix what's "visibly broken": missing signage, unlabeled chemicals, frayed cords, expired eyewash stations, etc. Sometimes, the boldest move is doing the basics—and doing them well.

PRIORITIZE RUTHLESSLY AND COMMUNICATE 'WHY'

In a site where everything looks broken, you need a system to decide what to fix first.



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I recommend using a risk-based triage approach. Plot every known issue on a simple risk matrix of likelihood vs. severity. Then, tackle the red zones first: life safety, regulatory violations and high-frequency injuries.

This might mean pausing a noncritical initiative so you can resolve a fire egress issue or fixing a chemical storage violation before launching a safety campaign.

It's equally important to communicate your "why." When employees see you prioritizing transparently—even if their concern isn't first in line—they're more likely to trust your judgment.

BUILD TRUST ONE WIN AT A TIME

In sites where EHS has been neglected or punitive, trust is often at zero. So, start small. Don't just walk the floor; solve a problem someone shows you. Fix the leaky roof over the personal protective equipment cabinet. Replace the cracked face shields. Celebrate the person who first spoke up.

People are always watching to see whether safety is just another program or whether it's finally going to matter. Your actions set that tone faster than any speech.

CUT THE NOISE—STREAMLINE AND SIMPLIFY

Many chaotic safety systems suffer not from a lack of policies, but from too many. You'll find bloated training modules that nobody retains, overlapping inspection checklists or third-party consultants delivering generic reports that go unread. And yet, employees are still getting injured.

Here's the uncomfortable truth: A lot of what's in place may be performative. Safety theater. Your job is to eliminate what's not working and focus on what actually prevents harm.

SAFETY LEADERSHIP

In one case, I replaced a vendor-run behavior based safety program with peer-led, five-minute long microtrainings tailored to actual floor tasks. The engagement level skyrocketed, not because the material was complex, but because it finally felt relevant.

Safety isn't about volume. It's about clarity, ownership and action.

DOCUMENT EVERYTHING—NOT FOR THE AUDIT, BUT FOR YOUR PEOPLE

You might feel pressure to produce formal reports, and you should keep good records. But don't let your only audience be auditors. Create visible wins. A monthly bulletin could show:

- » How many hazards were resolved.
- » What suggestions were implemented.
- » A spotlight on an employee who made a great catch.

It's not about perfection; it's about momentum. People need to see that

reporting hazards works, that their voice is heard, and that the EHS program is alive and evolving.

You'll also build credibility with leadership by tracking cost avoidance: reduced injury rates, fewer OSHA citations and even productivity improvements linked to safer workspaces.

MAKE SAFETY VISIBLE IN THE RIGHT PLACES

Culture change happens where attention goes. If you want people to care about safety, they have to see it—not just in posters or compliance signs—but in decision-making, leadership behavior and resource allocation.

People realize safety is more than paperwork when leadership talks about safety during town halls, when team leads bring up near-misses during stand-ups, and when action items from incident investigations are followed through publicly.

Even something as simple as tracking safety actions on a visible board or giving safety shoutouts during meetings can start to normalize safety as part of the job, not just a program run by one person.

Making safety visible in the right places isn't about flashy campaigns. It's about embedding it where people already pay attention.

ENGAGE THE PEOPLE WHO 'DON'T DO SAFETY'

Your biggest safety breakthrough may come from the folks who roll their eyes at you today, such as plant managers, shift supervisors or line leads. These folks may feel burned out on past programs or feel like EHS just slows them down. Don't fight them; recruit them.

Start by understanding what they care about, such as uptime, productivity and retention. Then show how safety



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actually helps meet those goals. For example, ergonomic improvements that reduce repetitive strain can lower turnover. Better labeling and storage can reduce inventory loss and speed up tool access. When you show that EHS is not a roadblock but a support function, you start turning skeptics into allies.

SHOW THE ROI OF PREVENTION—LOUDLY AND OFTEN

Executives don't wake up thinking about safety; they think about cost, reputation and efficiency. It's your job to translate safety work into language that gets funded and respected. That means:

- » Showing how resolving a repeated strain injury pattern saved thousands in workers' comp claims.
- » Explaining how fixing ventilation issues avoided a regulatory fine.
- » Sharing how better incident

investigation practices led to process improvements across shifts.

Tie everything you do to something leadership values: money, people or risk. When they see EHS driving business value, they'll listen longer—and fund more.

CARE FOR YOURSELF WHILE LEADING THROUGH CHAOS

This part doesn't get talked about enough. Leading EHS in a broken environment is exhausting. You're often the only one pushing back when timelines ignore safety, when budgets undercut your plan, and when people are skeptical or hostile.

So build your own support system. Join professional groups. Lean on mentors. Celebrate small wins. Remind yourself: If it feels hard, it's because it is, not because you're doing it wrong.

And take real breaks. Safety leaders need safety, too.

FINAL THOUGHTS

When you're handed a chaotic EHS program, you're not just cleaning up a mess. You're building trust, restoring structure and proving that safety is more than a checklist.

You won't fix it all in a quarter. You may not be thanked right away. But if you lead with clarity, consistency and care, you will see the culture shift.

And when that happens—when an operator stops you on the floor to share a near-miss, or a manager asks how to make their area safer—you'll know that your work is making a difference.

You don't need a playbook. You just need courage, focus and the willingness to start where others gave up.

One win at a time. **EHS**

Meghna Chaudhary is EHS manager with Hologic, a provider of medical technologies that detect, diagnose and treat women's health conditions.

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Reinforcing Safety Culture Through Ongoing Microtraining

Embedding short, frequent touchpoints into the flow of work can reshape habits and rebuild safety cultures.

By Rick Tobin

You know how traditional safety training often feels like a single event that you file away until the next year's refresher?

Microtraining is different. It shakes up conventional learning by delivering short, focused bursts of learning right when you need it. Instead of trying to cram an hour of content into one session (and watching people's eyes glaze over), you sprinkle 1 to 3 minute "nudges" throughout the day, week or month. Over time, those nudges add up—and that's exactly what cognitive science tells us works best.

WHY SMALLER PIECES OF INFORMATION STICK BETTER

Think of your brain as a desktop with limited surface area. If you pile on too many papers at once, you'll knock half of them off, lose important bills in the stacks, spill coffee on past-due notices, etc. That's cognitive overload in action—when your working memory hits its limit and learning grinds to a halt.

Microtraining keeps each lesson lean: one concept, one clear objective and one tiny "chunk" to process in under 5 minutes. The result is a focused learning experience that burns new synaptic pathways. In other words, it's learning that sticks!

SPACING AND RETRIEVAL PRACTICE

Once you've learned something, you don't want to see it just once. The "forgetting curve" shows memory fading fast after a single encounter, but if you revisit that nugget at spaced intervals, you flatten the curve and lock it into long-term memory. In our (SafetyNow) large-scale study, participants who reviewed material across days, weeks and months retained far more than those who crammed everything at once. In fact, those participants had nearly 8x the retention level.

Here's how the magic works: Every time you quiz someone (even with a one-question scenario), you're doing retrieval practice—actively pulling knowledge out of memory rather than passively rereading. That act of recall strengthens the neural pathways, so next time the same hazard pops up, the safe response comes automatically.

WHAT REAL COMPANIES HAVE SEEN

- » Walmart's distribution centers rolled out 3 to 5 minute long gamified safety quizzes via their mobile app. Within six months, recordable incidents dropped by 54%, and observed safe behaviors jumped by 96%.
- » Bloomingdale's used a microlearning platform to deliver weekly safety refreshers to 10,000 store associates. Engagement hovered above 85%. In one year, the company slashed safety claims by 41%, saving over \$2 million.
- » At Parker Hannifin's Kent, Washington, campus, daily 2 minute ergonomics reminders via email and digital signage drove a 45% reduction in musculoskeletal incidents over two years.

Those aren't outliers. They're proof points that embedding short, frequent touchpoints into the flow of work can reshape habits and rebuild safety cultures.

DESIGNING YOUR OWN MICROTRAINING PROGRAM

So how does a company create and implement an effective microtraining program? These six steps are the key to success.

- » **Pinpoint your priorities.** Look at recent incidents or audit findings to identify the top three to five hazards or behaviors you want to shift.
- » **Build tiny modules.** For each priority, script a 1 to 5 minute piece (e.g., a quick video demo of proper lockout/tagout, a scenario-based quiz on personal protective equipment selection, or a step-by-step highlight of a pre-lift inspection).
- » **Schedule with spacing in mind.** Don't dump all modules at once. Stagger them over days and weeks—maybe Monday, Wednesday and Friday in week one, then a single follow-up in week four.
- » **Embed retrieval practice.** Include a single-question poll or scenario at the end of each module. Immediate feedback ("Yes, the safe way to do this is...") cements the lesson.
- » **Mix up your delivery.** Think text alerts, desktop pop-ups, digital signage in break rooms or quick huddles before

shifts. Variety keeps learners engaged and reaches those with different work styles.

- » **Measure and iterate.** Track completion rates, quiz scores, observed behavior changes in safety audits and actual incident trends. Use those insights to tweak content, timing or delivery channels.

KEY TAKEAWAYS YOU CAN ACT ON TODAY

- » **Start small:** Pilot with one hazard and one micro-module format (e.g., video and quiz).
- » **Leverage the spacing effect:** Schedule your modules across at least three separate days.
- » **Make every module interactive:** Even a one-question quiz counts as retrieval practice.
- » **Use real data:** Pick topics based on your last six months of incident or near-miss reports.
- » **Vary delivery:** Rotate between mobile push, email and on-site digital signage.
- » **Celebrate wins:** Share participation stats and incident reductions in your safety huddles.
- » **Iterate relentlessly:** Review metrics monthly and adjust content or cadence to keep momentum.

A CONTINUOUS, DATA-DRIVEN JOURNEY

Ongoing microtraining transforms safety learning from sporadic events into a continuous, data-driven journey. Organizations can iteratively shift behaviors, reinforce safe habits, and achieve measurable reductions in accidents and incidents by harnessing cognitive load management, spacing, retrieval practice, and embedding behavioral nudges directly into work routines.

Sound good?

The weight of academic research and compelling real-world outcomes underscores microtraining as an indispensable strategy for any safety-minded enterprise aiming to foster a lasting culture of care. **EHS**

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Sleepless Over Safety: The Hidden Toll of Workplace Incidents and How to Address It

“When incidents keep happening because the setup never changes or the controls are outdated, the pressure builds,” says James Smith, co-CEO of A-Safe.

By James Smith

Safety leadership in industrial settings is demanding by nature. For many professionals in this field, the responsibility does not end with their shift. Even when everything seems in order, incidents (e.g., near-misses, disrupted workflows and equipment concerns) remain front of mind. That persistent concern for health and safety managers is often invisible to others and carries consequences beyond operations. It affects their well-being, mental clarity and the ability to rest outside of the working environment.

When incidents keep happening because the setup never changes or the controls are outdated, the pressure builds. It puts not only compliance at stake, but the confidence of safety professionals, and the safety and well-being of all workers.

THE LINK BETWEEN NEAR-MISSES AND MENTAL FATIGUE

Each late-night alert, medical response or shift disruption adds to the growing mental burden. These moments contribute to operational strain and also erode trust across teams. In 2023, the American workplace experienced over 4,500 preventable injury-related deaths and over 4 million medically consulted injuries, according to the National Safety Council (NSC).

But the victims of these accidents are not just those who get injured. These events also affect those directly responsible for preventing them. Continuous stress from the fear of overlooking a risk can result in chronic fatigue. Decision-makers become hyperalert, and confidence in their safety infrastructure starts to falter. For example, if equipment is hard to reconfigure or cannot adapt to layout changes, the burden only grows.

The mental toll is rarely accounted for in traditional risk assessments. It does not show up in standard metrics, yet the mentality of constant risk anticipation shapes decisions on the ground every day, whether that is delaying maintenance to avoid blame or halting operations out of uncertainty. Health and safety leaders must move beyond reactive approaches with tools that reduce guesswork and restore visibility and flexibility.

WHEN SAFETY INFRASTRUCTURE CANNOT ADAPT, RISK INCREASES

There is a certain reluctance in reconfiguring traditional, bolted systems, as this often requires costly downtime. As a result,



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any changes are usually delayed until a close call or worse, forced intervention. That delay has consequences.

Workers adapt their behaviors around static infrastructure, finding workarounds that lead to inconsistent and sometimes unsafe routines. As infrastructure fails to reflect the reality on the floor, the gap between actual risk and perceived protection widens, leaving health and safety leaders with limited clarity and growing pressure.

NSC data shows construction, transportation and warehousing, and manufacturing are three of the top five industries with the most workplace fatalities, accounting for exactly 50% of all workplace deaths in 2023. These figures underscore the heightened risk in high-movement zones and the imperative need for adequate risk management in these industries.

This issue becomes especially pressing when facilities scale quickly. A layout that works for 20 vehicle movements per hour may become unfit when that volume doubles, or triples, for Black Friday or Christmas. Without the ability to adapt physical protection (e.g., safety barriers) quickly and safely, risk compounds go unnoticed. This makes it more difficult to spot emerging hazards before they escalate.

FLEXIBLE PROTECTION MEANS FEWER SLEEPLESS NIGHTS

Reducing the personal and operational impact of safety leadership starts with control. Modern modular systems allow for real-time changes with minimal disruption. We are talking about minutes instead of hours or days, because modern barriers are built with advanced materials, such as polymers, and can be transported quickly thanks to their simple installation and low weight.

The thought of collapsing racking is enough to keep anyone awake at night. That is why the market now has racking protection with embedded smart sensors that provide live data on impacts and near misses that identify accident hot spots. These sensors can also monitor vehicle and personnel routes so that walkways can be changed if the data shows the possible risk of an impact.

When infrastructure aligns with actual movement patterns, facilities reduce hesitation and restore worker trust, not only in the systems but in the leadership behind them. Modular safety setups also support agility during audits and inspections.

According to a survey by McKinsey & Company, highly successful agile transformations typically deliver around 30% gains in efficiency, customer satisfaction, employee engagement and operational performance. This level of agility contributes to performance and, more importantly, to the reputation and standing of the facility and the company that owns it.

TURNING PASSIVE POLICIES INTO ACTIVE PREVENTION

Safety performance cannot depend solely on audits or static policy documents but rather on data-driven systems that offer continuous insight. Sensors integrated into safety solutions can detect frequent contact points, flag repeated impacts and identify areas where risks are increasing. This data supports real-time operational adjustments and encourages teamwide engagement. When staff see their feedback inform change—and when data supports those decisions—safety culture becomes proactive. It stops being a checklist and instead becomes a responsive, evolving system that alleviates pressure on health and safety leaders.

Impact data is a critical input for decision-making in a high-performance facility. Insights on vehicle movement patterns, incident timing and near-miss locations allow leaders to redesign workflows, retrain teams, and confidently reposition safety solutions as needed without compromising performance or targets. Over time, this creates a self-correcting loop where systems and people reinforce each other.

It also enables strategic planning. By taking a proactive approach to risk management, facilities can forecast future risk based on trends in current data, allocating resources more effectively and avoiding unplanned shutdowns.

HELPING LEADERSHIP SEE WHAT SAFETY TEAMS ALREADY KNOW

Health and safety managers already understand the importance of protective infrastructure. What they often face is hesitation from senior stakeholders who question the need to invest in safety when there has not been a major incident. This resistance can delay planning and upgrades as well as leave teams exposed to risks that are entirely foreseeable.

Presenting the financial case becomes a practical way to unlock that buy-in. For every \$1 spent on workplace safety, companies see a return on investment of \$4 to \$6, according to the American Society of Safety Professionals. These returns are visible in reduced downtime and fewer operational stoppages. When conversations with leadership shift toward cost avoidance and risk reduction, investment becomes easier to justify.

Modern safety infrastructure also helps sites remain stable during periods of change. When systems can be adjusted without disruption, teams operate with greater certainty. Also, employees are more likely to stay in roles where they feel protected. An OSHA-aligned study revealed that strong safety programs boost employee retention rates by up to 55%.

These outcomes help safety managers make a stronger case internally. The goal is not to respond once something goes wrong, but to prevent issues before they emerge. That clarity allows operational focus to remain on performance rather than recovery.

PEACE OF MIND THROUGH PROACTIVE PROTECTION

No safety leader can prevent every risk, but they can remove the guesswork that keeps risk management reactive. With modular, responsive infrastructure, risk becomes something you can act on—not just monitor. The mental strain often stems from uncertainty about whether protection will hold up under pressure. That strain eases when systems are built to adapt, giving leaders the confidence to focus on what is ahead rather than what might go wrong.

Risk management is not only about adding physical barriers but also about knowing that the solutions in place will work, even if and when demands shift. That is what lets safety leaders do their job with confidence. To turn off their phone at the end of their shift. To stop scanning the corridor logs at midnight. To know that the infrastructure protecting their teams today will still hold up tomorrow. **EHS**

James Smith is co-CEO at A-SAFE. With 25 years of experience in the industry, Smith has transformed this family business into a global enterprise with 700 employees and presence in over 65 countries. Smith is based in West Yorkshire (UK), and specializes in industrial safety innovation, product development and global market expansion.

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- 3**  **Stowage Points:** Avoid stowing clamps on anything but the designated stowage point, ideally one which doesn't put strain on the clamp spring and teeth.
- 4**  **Continuity Test:** A periodic test on the electrostatic earthing clamp aids its ability to dissipate charge accumulation. The industry standard being $\leq 10\Omega$.

**GROUNDING IN SAFETY,
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NEW PRODUCTS



Safety Helmets

Milwaukee Tool has introduced the BOLT Full Brim Safety Helmets for more head protection coverage that's also more comfortable. These Type 2 Class C (vented) and Class E (non-

vented) safety helmets offer protection from both top and side impacts. These safety helmets are ANSI/ISEA Z89.1-2014 Type 2 certified and third-party tested. Milwaukee's latest full brim safety helmets are now the industry's lightest weight. They're also designed to stay up to 15 degrees Fahrenheit cooler thanks to ventilation holes; an antimicrobial, washable sweatband and liner also helps prevent odor and bacteria buildup. The helmets feature a padded suspension with a swinging ratchet adjustment system and a five-point adjustable chin strap. These helmets can be fitted with Milwaukee's other BOLT System accessories. **Milwaukee**
www.milwaukeeool.com

Ergonomics Wearable

SpatialCortex has launched the MOVA SEAT, a smart wearable device designed for seated workers to improve posture, reduce discomfort and boost workplace well-being. The biomechanical single-sensor device is paired with an app to provide users with real-time feedback when poor posture is detected. The wearable can be used by workers in the office, at home or on the go. The MOVA



SEAT provides anonymized data insights for health and safety professionals, so they can tailor their ergonomics program, training and other initiatives.

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Face Protection

Brass Knuckle's Vader Combo provides protective eyewear and a full-face shield that's not attached to a safety helmet. The combined face covering has an impact shield that protects against projectiles, debris and wetness with D3 droplet and splash protection. The BK-Anti-FOG coating and built-in venting system makes it easier to see—and wear—the face and eye protection guard. The Vader Combo provides UV protection, fits over most prescription eyeglasses and meets or exceeds the AS/NZS 1337.1:2010 eye and face protection. **Brass Knuckle**

www.brassknuckleprotection.com



United States Postal Service

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation (Requester Publications Only)

1. Publication Title: EHS TODAY

2. Publication Number: 905-040

3. Filing Date: 9/22/2025

4. Issue Frequency: Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter

5. Number of Issues Published Annually: 4

6. Annual Subscription Price: Free to Qualified

7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Not Printer): Endeavor Business Media, LLC, 201 N Main Street, Ste. 5, Fort Atkinson, WI 53538

8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher (Not Printer): Endeavor Business Media, LLC 30 Burton Hills Blvd., Ste 185, Nashville, TN 37215

9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: EVP: Lisa Paolessa, Endeavor Business Media, LLC, 30 Burton Hills Blvd., Ste 185, Nashville, TN 37215; Editor: Dave Blanchard, Endeavor Business Media, LLC 30 Burton Hills Blvd., Ste 185, Nashville, TN 37215; Managing Editor: Nicole Stempak, Endeavor Business Media, LLC 30 Burton Hills Blvd., Ste 185, Nashville, TN 37215

10. Owner: Full name and complete mailing address: Endeavor Media Holdings I, LLC, 905 Tower Place, Nashville, TN 37204; Endeavor Media Holdings II, LLC, 905 Tower Place, Nashville, TN 37204; Endeavor Capital Partners Fund LP, 20 Burton Hills Blvd, Suite 430, Nashville, TN 37215; RCP Endeavor, Inc., 20 Burton Hills Blvd, Suite 430, Nashville, TN 37215; Northeast Mezzanine Fund II, LP, 312 Walnut Street, Suite 210, Cincinnati, OH 45202; Integrity Holdings, LP, 44235 Hillboro Pike, Nashville, TN 37215; Everade Fund II, LP, 155 East 44th St, Suite 2101 - 10 Grand Central, New York, NY 10017; Everade Endeavor F1 Blocker, LLC, 155 East 44th St, Suite 2101 - 10 Grand Central, New York, NY 10017; Everade Endeavor International Blocker, LLC, 155 East 44th St, Suite 2101 - 10 Grand Central, New York, NY 10017; Everade Foundation Fund LP, 155 East 44th St, Suite 2101 - 10 Grand Central, New York, NY 10017; Everade Endeavor Blocker, LLC, 155 East 44th St, Suite 2101 - 10 Grand Central, New York, NY 10017

11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages or Other Securities: None

12. Tax Status (For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at nonprofit rates): (Check one)
The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes: N/A

13. Publication Title: EHS TODAY

	Issue Date	No. Copies of Single Issue Published	No. Copies of Single Issue Published
	Preceding 12 Months	Nearest to Filing Date	
a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run)	31,554	31,888	
b. Legitimate Paid and/or Requested Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail)			
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(2) In-Country Paid/Requested Mail Subscriptions stated on PS Form 3541. (Include direct written request from recipient, telemarketing and Internet requests from recipient, paid subscriptions including nominal rate subscriptions, employer requests, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies.)	0	0	
(3) Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid or Requested Distribution Outside USPS®	205	238	
(4) Requested Copies Distributed by Other Mail Classes Through the USPS (e.g. First-Class Mail®)	0	0	
c. Total Paid and/or Requested Distribution (Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3), and (4))	18,503	18,668	
d. Nonrequested Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail)			
(1) Outside Country Nonrequested Copies Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include Sample copies, Requests Over 3 years old, Requests included by a Premium, Bulk Sales and Requests including Association Requests, Names obtained from Business Directories, Lists, and other sources)	12,244	12,105	
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(4) Nonrequested Copies Distributed Outside the Mail (Include Pickup Stands, Trade Shows, Showrooms and Other Sources)	188	250	
e. Total Nonrequested Distribution (Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3), and (4))	12,431	12,355	
f. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e)	30,934	31,023	
g. Copies not Distributed	620	865	
h. Total (Sum of 15f and g)	31,554	31,888	
i. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation (15c divided by 15f times 100)	59.81%	60.17%	
16. Electronic Copy Circulation			
a. Requested and Paid Electronic Copies	3,093	3,102	
b. Total Requested and Paid Print Copies (Line 15c) + Requested/Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)	21,596	21,770	
c. Total Requested Copy Distribution (Line 15f) + Requested/Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)	34,027	34,125	
d. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation (Both Print & Electronic Copies) (15b divided by 15c x 100)	63.47%	63.79%	

17. I certify that 50% of all my distribution copies (electronic and print) are legitimate requests or paid copies:

18. Publication of Statement of Ownership for a Requester Publication is required and will be printed in the issue of this publication.

19. Date: 9/22/25

20. Signature: Tracy Skallman, Audience Development Manager

EHS Today®

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Telephone: (234) 466-0200

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES	1 Year	2 Years	Per Copy	Group (5+ copies)
U.S. & possessions	\$86.25	\$123.75	\$10	\$35
Canada/Mexico	\$111.25	\$161.25	15	40
International	\$136.25	\$211.25	20	50

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LIST RENTAL: Joe DiNardo, jdinardo@endeavorb2b.com, (440) 487-8001.

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CORPORATE OFFICE: Endeavor Business Media, 30 Burton Hills Blvd., Suite 185, Nashville, TN 37215, U.S., www.endeavorbusinessmedia.com.

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Nicole
Stempak
Managing Editor



Looking Back, Moving Forward

Let's shake off the glow of nostalgia and keep striving for brighter days ahead.

In the film “Midnight in Paris,” the male lead, Gil Pender, travels back in time to the 1920s, where he meets famous authors, artists and critics in France’s capital city. It’s a film about nostalgia and the glory days, and it’s glorious.

The costumes and sets are spectacular, and the all-star cameos make the film a joy to watch. But it’s the twist near the end that makes this movie one of my favorites. Gil’s crush from the 1920s tells him that if she could travel in time, she would go back to Paris’ golden age: the 1890s.

Lately, I’ve been thinking a lot about the past. I understand the lure of longing for days gone by, especially those that our memories have cast with a soft light. Nostalgia is a powerful emotion, but memories are often fickle.

We remember only the best parts, like how romantic the late 18th and early 19th centuries were. Indeed, that was when the likes of Mary Shelley and Jane Austen were producing their masterpieces. However, there were also the deadly Napoleonic Wars, cholera and smallpox outbreaks, among others.

It was with that critical eye that drew me toward my first ever reading of Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*. I wasn’t sure I’d have the stomach for Sinclair’s fictionalized story based on his time spent working at a meatpacking plant in Chicago’s Union Stock Yards. Although I had to refrain from reading right before or after eating, it’s one of the best books I’ve read all year.

Sinclair’s book focuses on the working conditions for protagonist Jurgis Rudkus and his family. Jurgis and the other adult family members worked in factories for at least 12 hours a day, six days a week—including Christmas. Initially, the adults wanted the children to attend school, but when financial circumstances worsened, they had a priest forge a certificate so the children could contribute to the household.

The author’s gruesomely detailed descriptions of food manufacturing processes make me grateful that I needn’t drink pale-blue milk, watered down and doctored with formaldehyde. Or that I needn’t eat sausage treated with borax and glycerin and full of “potato flour,” or the remnants of potato after the starch and alcohol have been extracted.

The working conditions were even worse.

It’s no wonder that Sinclair’s story was riddled with so many references to characters suffering accidents, injuries, illnesses,

diseases and infections, such as blood poisoning (also known as the life-threatening condition sepsis). It’s also no wonder that Sinclair’s story prompted nationwide outrage and spurred the formation of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Sinclair’s story does not make me nostalgic for bygone days. I’ll happily take all the PPE, technology and training you want to give me to be safe on the job, thank you very much.

For me, *The Jungle* symbolizes the intersection of past, present and future. As far as I know, workers have always wanted to do their job and then go home to their family. Workers have always wanted to have a belly full of food and a clean and comfortable home. Workers have always wanted to practice or pursue activities that are important to them, such as involvement with their faith community or gardening. I have never heard workers say they want to do their job more dangerously or that they wouldn’t mind being injured, maimed or killed to support their company’s bottom line.

Some things change, and some stay the same. But as safety professionals—and as a society—we should not fool ourselves by thinking the past is always better. Much of the time, we stand on the shoulders of previous generations’ accomplishments. That is the crux of the American dream, after all.

With that in mind, let’s not spend more time debating, or limiting, the scope of occupational safety and health. Let’s not treat workers as expendable labor rather than as complete people who need psychological safety and to be their authentic selves to perform their best. Let’s stop focusing on historical data.

Instead, let’s focus on how to intervene even before a near-miss incident. Let’s use the desire for better world for our posterity guide today’s efforts and decision-making.

I’d like to propose an alternative—and quote one of my favorite songs: “The best is yet to come and babe, won’t that be fine? You think you’ve seen the sun, but you ain’t seen it shine.” Let’s let the promise and potential of better, brighter days ahead inspire us to do more, starting right now.

Nicole Stempak

Send an e-mail with your thoughts to nstempak@endeavorb2b.com.

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