

THE MAGAZINE FOR ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH AND SAFETY LEADERS

SPRING 2025  
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# EHS Today®

The Biggest Trends in

# WORKPLACE SAFETY

in the 21st Century  
(So Far)

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## Save the Date for Safety Leadership Conference 2025 in Phoenix!

**ITEM:** We're excited to announce that this year's **Safety Leadership Conference (SLC)** will be held October 20-22, 2025, at the Renaissance Phoenix Glendale Hotel & Conference Center in Phoenix, Arizona! The theme of our 14th annual SLC will be "Leading the Way: Empowering Safety Professionals to Become Tomorrow's Safety Leaders." Consider this your invitation to join us as we host safety professionals, practitioners and solution providers gathered together for the same reason: to share best practices on how to achieve world-class safety excellence. There will be keynote presentations; focused safety talks on various compelling topics; exhibits of the latest safety technology and solutions; in-depth workshops; and the presentation of the America's Safest Companies awards for 2025. Make plans now to attend SLC 2025! Go to [safetyleadershipconference.com](https://safetyleadershipconference.com) for more details.

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only to those who've signed up as members, which among other things includes Regulatory Updates, based on compliance news related to OSHA, EPA, MSHA and other regulatory agencies. You can also download any of our exclusive ebooks, which focus on emerging trends devoted to a specific topic. Here's a list of our latest ebooks:

- **Strategies to Improve Safety Training & Engagement:** How to ensure employees have the knowledge they need to stay safe.
- **Guide to Ergonomic Safety:** Musculoskeletal disorders are one of the most common workplace injuries, but it doesn't have to be that way.
- **Guide to Construction Safety:** Everything you need to know to keep workers safe—from working at heights to summer heat to mental fitness.
- **Guide to Safety Technology:** While there are many new technologies that can make the workplace safer, EHS professionals will need to make a solid business case for them.

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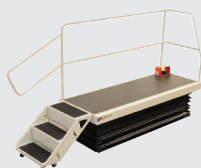
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Dave  
Blanchard  
Editor-in-Chief



# Are We on the Right Path to Make America Safe Again?

*Investing in safety is the surest way for companies to be productive and profitable.*

In his second go-round at running the executive branch of the United States, President Donald Trump has made it clear that whatever policies the Biden administration adopted, he plans to go in the opposite direction. While much of the headlines so far this year have focused on Trump's global aspirations – tariffs, annexing Greenland and Canada, converting Gaza into a luxury resort, renaming the Gulf of Mexico – his influence on reshaping the narrative for occupational health and safety could be as profound as it is chaotic.

The truth is, at this writing in February, nobody really knows which executive orders will survive judicial review and which clearing-the-decks initiatives by Elon Musk's so-called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) will be challenged or reversed. What's clear, though, is that as the Trump 2.0 administration moves forward, the next four years are shaping up to look quite different from the previous four.

In one of his first executive orders, Trump restricted the ability of OSHA (and the EPA and all other federal agencies) to propose or issue any new regulation until that rule was approved by an agency department head appointed or named by the President. There's also the "Ten-for-One provision" which requires that for every new regulation enacted, 10 existing rules must be repealed. He's also ordered all federal offices to eliminate their DEI programs; ordered the mass deportation of undocumented immigrants; and laid off USDA and FAA inspectors (and then quickly had to try to rehire some of those inspectors who were working on the bird flu and airline safety programs); withdrew the U.S. from the Paris climate agreement; and the list goes on.

If EHS professionals are anything like the rest of the voting population, chances are quite good that many of you voted for Trump in the last election, and you might very well be applauding the speed at which things are getting done in Washington. *EHS Today's* readers are very much a part of the

EHS profession, and you've made it clear over the years that our coverage of regulatory compliance is something you value, so we'll continue to do so. Our role, as we see it, is not to debate the merits of every decision that the new administration makes, but rather to report on emerging situations that could have an impact on workplace safety.

From all appearances, the driving inspiration behind Trump's deregulation efforts is the same philosophy that economist Milton Friedman suggested decades ago: "The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits." If you look at what the Trump administration is doing from that perspective, everything else kind of makes sense. It's expensive, after all, for companies to design new processes and purchase new equipment that reduces their carbon emissions. It's expensive to train workers on how to properly run a forklift. It's expensive to upgrade the PPE your employees wear on a job site or in a factory so that it fits properly and is appropriate to the specific task. It's expensive to invest in ergonomics solutions. It's expensive to protect workers from falling from heights.

But then again, as all safety professionals know very well, it's even more expensive – in the long and the short run – to NOT invest in safety. When it comes to workers' compensation claims, medical expenses, legal expenses, lost time, lost customers, reputational damage, difficulty in attracting and retaining new workers, the costs of a serious injury or fatality can be astronomical. And how do you put a value on a human life? There's no balance sheet that can adequately quantify such a loss.

Now it's quite possible that everything could work out just fine, and in a vindication of the belief that "a rising tide lifts all boats," all of these executive orders could result in higher wages, lower inflation, a significant improvement in physical and mental health, a drastic reduction in workplace incidents, and an overall higher quality of life for all.

But until we see an executive order or passage of a bill that makes it harder for companies to pollute the environment, harder to avoid reporting serious injuries and fatalities, and harder to underpay or fail to promote employees because of their gender, age, or skin color, then it's difficult right now to envision or understand how we're going to be making America safe again.

Send an e-mail with your thoughts to [dblanchard@endeavorb2b.com](mailto:dblanchard@endeavorb2b.com).

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## New Standard for Industrial Bump Caps

*The standard establishes a guideline for classification, test procedures and performance requirements.*

**A**s head injuries sideline tens of thousands of workers each year, the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) announced on January 15 the new ANSI/ISEA 100-2024 Industrial Bump Cap Standard.

The measure establishes a consistent guideline for classification, test procedures and performance requirements for bump caps, aiming to reduce injuries caused by head impacts with stationary objects.

Industrial bump caps serve as a category of personal protective equipment (PPE) designed to protect workers from bumps, scrapes and cuts in environments where traditional hard hats or safety helmets may not be required or practical. The new ANSI/ISEA 100-2024 standard addresses a critical gap in workplace head protection by providing manufacturers with a benchmark for developing effective bump cap solutions.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), head injuries account for approximately 78,000 incidents resulting in at least one day away from work each year in the private sector. Notably, only 7.2% of these injuries occur in construction, where hard hats are commonly used, while service workers and those in transportation and material moving occupations—sectors less likely to utilize hard hats or bump caps—account for 22.1% and 20.6% of head injuries, respectively.

“The amount of head injuries outside of traditional hard hat zones highlights the need for a different, application-appropriate solution,” said Greg Schrab, president of Ergodyne and ISEA trustee, in a statement. “The approval of this standard is a significant step toward enhancing safety for these workers.”

### HOW BUMP CAPS DIFFER FROM HARD HATS

“Bump caps are a vital component of comprehensive workplace head protection,” said ISEA President & CEO Cam Mackey in a statement announcing the standard. “However,



ANSI/ISEA 100-2024 is not a replacement for products covered by ANSI/ISEA Z89.1, which provide an entirely different level of protection for a variety of similar and different hazards.”

Bump caps and hard hats both fall under the category of head protection but are designed for very different applications:

» **Protection Scope:** Hard hats are engineered to provide protection against falling objects and high-impact forces, making them essential for construction and other

heavy-duty industries. Bump caps, on the other hand, are designed to protect against minor bumps, scrapes and cuts from stationary objects.

» **Weight and Comfort:** Bump caps are significantly lighter and more comfortable than hard hats, making them ideal for extended wear in low-impact environments.

» **Use Case:** Hard hats are mandated in environments with risks of falling objects. Bump caps fill the need for lighter protection where such risks are minimal but head injuries from stationary hazards still occur.

Prior to this standard, there was no U.S. benchmark for bump cap manufacturers. The existing ANSI/ISEA Z89.1 standard for industrial head protection did not cover bump caps, and manufacturers often referenced the European standard, EN812, which has limitations, particularly concerning universal bump cap inserts. The new ANSI/ISEA 100 standard addresses these issues by incorporating testing and language clarity that accommodate various designs, including bump cap inserts that can be used with different types of headwear—from baseball caps to winter hats.

The ANSI/ISEA 100-2024 standard shares similar performance requirements with EN812 but offers greater flexibility in design to meet the diverse needs of workers across various industries and work scenarios. **EHS**

—EHS Today Staff



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## Worker Training in the Supply Chain: Are You Addressing These Hidden Risks?

*Effective worker training is critical — but are you prepared for the biggest challenges? Discover how to overcome key risks and ensure safety and compliance in your supply chain.*

**Y**our workforce is your most valuable asset, but training gaps can lead to compliance violations, safety incidents, and inefficiencies. Many companies struggle with inconsistent training, regulatory complexity, and ensuring contractors meet the same safety standards as employees. If your training strategy isn't built to address these risks, your business could face serious consequences.

Without proper training, your organization is exposed to risk that's easy to overlook, including:

- Inconsistent training across contractors and employees
- Compliance gaps leading to legal and financial risks
- The challenge of keeping up with evolving safety regulations

In our blog, "Worker Training Risks and Challenges in the Supply Chain," we outline the solution to mastering training within your organization. Read about six hidden risks and how to overcome them. Plus, learn more insights to help your team, including:

- How to create a uniform training program
- Digital tools to streamline worker education
- Best practices for improving engagement and retention

Want to ensure your workforce is trained, compliant, and safe? Read the full article to learn how to tackle training risks head-on.

Enhance Training Programs to Ensure Workers Remain Safe

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<https://www.avetta.com/blog/worker-training-risks-and-challenges-in-the-supply-chain-part-two>

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Adrienne  
Selko  
Senior Editor



# Call It What You Want, but DEI is Really a Talent Strategy

*Now isn't the time to give up the values of DEI and risk not attracting talent to our organizations, says Christie Smith.*

It's time for a bit of a reality check when it comes to DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion), says Christie Smith, PhD, former vice president of inclusion & diversity at consumer electronics giant Apple and founder of The Humanity Studio.

DEI has had its ups and downs over the years but now is a very dangerous time to question this concept, says Smith. "When we look at the skill scarcity as well as the half-life of skills, combined with the economic impact of low employee engagement, we are at a crisis situation in the workplace."

That isn't the ideal time to be giving up the values of DEI and risk not attracting talent to our organizations, especially if companies want to meet their revenue and growth goals, she says.

One needs to look no further than the reality of demographics. Millennials and Gen Z are the most diverse workforce this country has ever had, Smith points out. And companies need to draw from this pool of talent, which views DEI in the workplace as essential, if they want to be successful.

Another characteristic of these groups is that they represent the fastest growing segment of workers called fractional workers. "These are workers who are fine with not joining a major corporation and are building their own companies," Smith says. "Are companies going to risk their competitive advantages by ignoring the values of diversity, equity and inclusion and not attract these workers?"

All is not doom and gloom, however. If you ask most leaders, they do in fact value DEI, but they aren't prioritizing it. "It's 10th in the prioritization of all the other things that they have to deal with," explains Smith. "If we don't make

it a first or second priority to build DEI into the company's culture instead of being just a program or initiative, we will not continue to be competitive."

When it comes to the business case for DEI, Smith cites her years of experience in the field. "I've been in the workforce for nearly 40 years working in some aspect of DEI, and I'm always asked about the business case. I think that is a false start, frankly. If you have humans in the workplace, and you need humans in the workplace, that's the business case. When I was at Apple, as a DEI officer, our mission statement was that it was everyone's job to bring everyone in. That was a necessity to be able to bring in the largest pool of talent that we could get."

Attracting and keeping talent has been a challenge the past few years. One particularly troubling area is employee engagement, which affects retention. Each year, declining employee engagement continues to cost the global economy \$8.8 trillion a year.

Combining these myriad issues, leadership is struggling with how to manage its talent strategy. And Smith has some advice. "We need leaders who are more human and can manage the complexity of all these issues with the humans who are in their organizations."

In her new book, *Essential*, Smith presents a framework to revitalize leadership skills. The book discusses a leadership flywheel built around emotional maturity that has leaders suspending self-interest and having a mindset of absolute service. And part of that service perspective is being able to see the context in which employees join their companies and understand their needs. Compassion and empathy must come into play. "While companies consider these soft skills, I would call them power skills," says Smith. "And we need to use those skills to make sure that we architect teams that enable people to live up to their highest potential at work."

And of course, that structure ties in with understanding the core values of DEI.

*Adrienne Selko*

Send an e-mail with your thoughts to [aselko@endeavorb2b.com](mailto:aselko@endeavorb2b.com).



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# Unyielding Commitment: The Imperative of Excelling in Contractor Safety Management

By Shawn M. Galloway

**P**ursuing excellence in contractor safety management is a crucial endeavor demanding unwavering attention, resources and commitment across all functions and organizational levels.

Despite the challenges and barriers that may deter the average organization from prioritizing contractor safety—let alone striving for excellence—the imperative of achieving this goal among the best safety-performing organizations remains indisputable. Organizations can advance their safety standards and unlock many advantages by addressing factors such as leadership awareness, cost concerns, the complexity of required compliance and management systems, and resistance to change. These benefits include: improved risk mitigation; compliance with regulations, safety records and contractor relationships; enhanced cost savings, reputation, stakeholder confidence and brand value; increased operational efficiency, employee morale and continuity; and of course, a more robust safety culture.

Explaining these benefits in a way that adds value to business leaders and enables the pursuit of the goals they are measured by is key to motivating organizations to invest in contractor safety management as a strategic and moral priority.

Some organizations may not fully understand the extent of their legal, ethical and operational obligations related to contractor safety. This knowledge gap often leads to a lack of urgency in prioritizing safety responsibility and management. However, it is crucial to recognize that contractor safety is not merely a regulatory checkbox but a foundational component of responsible business operations and corporate citizenship.

Investing in comprehensive contractor safety programs may initially seem costly, but the long-term benefits far outweigh the expenses. These benefits include risk mitigation, reputation protection and enhanced operational efficiency. Moreover, implementing standardized safety protocols, technology-enabled management systems and dedicated oversight resources can address the complexity of managing contractors across multiple projects and locations.

Organizations that fail to prioritize contractor safety expose themselves to significant risks and liabilities. These include legal penalties, reputational damage and operational disruptions—all of which can have far-reaching consequences. In contrast, organizations proactively addressing contractor safety can achieve operational continuity, cost savings, improved workforce morale and a more substantial reputation in the marketplace.

Excellence in contractor safety management is not just about compliance—it requires moving from the often perceived platitudes of *Safety First* and *Safety Is Our Top Priority* to embedding safety as a core organizational value. This begins with stated and demonstrated leadership commitment, and extends to fostering a culture where safety is seen through decisions made at every level. Key strategies for embedding safety as a value include:

**Leadership Engagement:** Senior leaders must champion safety initiatives, allocate adequate resources, hold other leaders accountable, and consistently communicate the importance of contractor safety.

**Comprehensive Training Programs:** Both company and contractor personnel must receive ongoing safety training tailored to their roles and responsibilities.

**Standardized Safety Protocols:** Implementing consistent safety standards across all projects and locations ensures alignment and reduces variability in safety practices.

**Technology Integration:** Leveraging technology, such as digital safety management platforms and tools, can streamline contractor onboarding, training, compliance monitoring, identifying the disconnect between work as planned and work as done, and detect opportunities to address emerging risks and industry advancements.

While contractor safety excellence is undeniably challenging, it is replete with rewards. Organizations that succeed in this endeavor position themselves for long-term success in several key areas:

**Improved Safety Performance:** Reduced accidents and injuries lead to better safety records and lower insurance costs.

**Regulatory Compliance:** Proactive safety management helps organizations stay ahead of evolving regulations, reducing the risk of fines and penalties.

**Enhanced Reputation:** A strong safety culture bolsters stakeholder confidence, attracts top talent, and strengthens customer and employee loyalty.

**Operational Resilience:** Robust safety practices minimize disruptions, free up capital for additional investment, and ensure business continuity.



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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**SCAN ME**

# The Biggest Trends in WORKPLACE SAFETY in the 21st Century (So Far)



*EHS Today's editors reflect on the defining developments in occupational health and safety over the past 25 years.*

**By Dave Blanchard, Adrienne Selko and Nicole Stempak**

**T**hose of you with long memories, if you're old enough to remember back 25 years, might recall that Y2K was the dominant trend on everybody's mind as the calendar was nearing the year 2000. Prince had it wrong when he sang that "we're gonna party like it's 1999." Instead, the business world was filled with angst as to whether all computer systems were going to shut down when their internal calendars rebooted not to the year 2000 but backwards to 1900. The fear was that the world would go offline. Of course, those were simpler times so the total reliance on smartphones and Internet of Things-connected devices wasn't a thing yet, but safety professionals still had plenty to worry about.

As it turned out, Y2K ended up being pretty much a non-event, but it certainly set the stage for a most tumultuous start to the 21st century, from the 9/11 attacks of 2001 to the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak from 2002-2004, to Hurricanes Katrina (2005) and Harvey (2017), to the COVID-19 pandemic beginning in 2020, to the recent California wildfires. Whether it's natural disasters, workplace violence, or the disturbing rise in suicides, it's hard to conclude that the world has become a safer place since 2000.

In the year 2000, there were 5,915 workplace fatalities in the U.S., according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, or 16 workers per day on average. In 2023 (the most recent year for BLS's reporting), there were 5,283, or 15 workplace fatalities per day. Looking at those numbers, one could conclude that workplace conditions haven't dramatically improved since the dawn of the 21st century.

Statistics don't necessarily tell the full story, though. Despite everything just mentioned above, there is plenty of evidence that workplace safety has gained in prominence throughout companies large and small. What follows is a quick trip through the past quarter century

to revisit some of the highlights (and lowlights) in environment, health and safety, based on coverage since 2000 in *Occupational Hazards* (our previous name) and *EHS Today*.



## SAFETY FINALLY EARNS ITS SEAT IN THE BOARDROOM

EHS professionals were always a valued part of any organization, but when the pandemic hit they were quickly ushered into the executives' offices and asked to be an on-going presence. They became the heroes of that tumultuous time with their rapid response on how to keep employees safe while simultaneously ensuring that the company implemented state and federal regulations. While some had existing playbooks, most did not. Creating procedures and communicating them across stakeholders, they more than earned those seats. Many felt that their true value was finally realized.

Those chairs are still occupied as organizations feel more comfortable tying ROI to safety. Evaluation of the function has expanded from prevention of workplace injuries to creating a safety culture that is now an integral part of every company's strategy. Safety culture has specific goals and actions with industry recognition based on the effectiveness of this culture.

The basis for this reorganization has been building over the past 25 years as safety has been baked into



every job. The workforce is continually trained in improved safety methods and held accountable for safety records. Most managers' performance reviews now include safety components. And investment in the culture has included capital expenditures on safety technology, through robots performing "unsafe" jobs, as well as analytics to better manage incident rates.

The number of stakeholders who are involved in safety analysis is increasing. Inside the building employees view safe working conditions as a term of employment. Outside the building, it's a recruiting tool. And in the general economy, Wall Street views safety in its company valuation.



## WHATEVER HAPPENED TO ENVIRONMENTALISM?

Let's go back further than 2000 for a moment—back to the 1970s, when Earth Day got its start, when ecology and pollution were frequent topics on the nightly news, and when environmentalism was a distinct political force. In 1970, under the watch of Republican President Richard Nixon, the Environmental Protection Agency was launched, an agency with a clear mission: to protect human health and the environment. The EPA got off to a quick start with a lot of impressive goals and accomplishments: cleaning up the burning Cuyahoga River, establishing the Clean Air Act and then the Clean Water Act, banning DDT as a pesticide, and similar efforts to make living conditions safer for everybody. The push to reduce pollution shifted to protecting the ozone layer to reducing carbon emissions to protecting the planet itself from global warming (or as it is now known, climate change).

Of course, from the very beginning of the movement businesses started challenging the EPA and other environment-focused initiatives for meddling in the affairs of private industry—and not just meddling, but tacking on significant costs to their bottom line. Over the years, new terms emerged to try to breathe new life into environmentalism: the green movement, sustainability, corporate social responsibility and more recently, environmental, social and governance (ESG). But as with just about everything that can be politicized, in the 21st century it's been one step forward, one step backward, and occasionally one step sideways in the monitoring and regulating of emissions, wastewater, hazardous chemicals and other nasty things that nobody in their right minds would want in their communities. At this writing, President Trump has pulled the US out

of the Paris Agreement on climate change (for the second time; he did the same thing in 2017), pingponging President Obama's agreement to participate and President Biden's reversal of Trump's first pullout.

Right now, with Trump focusing on deregulating just about everything, the future of ESG as a standard for business investing is very much in doubt. What is not in doubt, at least if you put any faith in public polling, is that consumers are very much in favor of buying products that are environmentally and socially responsible; according to a recent McKinsey/NielsenIQ study, consumers prefer products with ESG-related claims over those that don't. In a separate study of corporate CEOs, consulting firm KPMG discovered that sustainability initiatives improves financial performance for companies, particularly when it comes to access to new capital and customer loyalty.

While the term "ESG" itself is a political hot potato, consumers—especially, young consumers—are likely to continue to champion its cause. And EHS professionals, who of course are tasked with ensuring safe and clean environments for their employers, will continue to play an outsized role in fulfilling their companies' sustainability initiatives.



## TECHNOLOGY OFFERS AN EXPONENTIAL LEAP IN SAFETY

The walk across the factory floor today, as compared to 25 years ago, reflects the myriad ways technology has improved safety. Employees are outfitted with wearables that monitor their movements to improve ergonomics. They wear augmented reality glasses that provide training videos on how to correctly operate machinery. And those same glasses are teaching new workers, the group most likely to be injured, how to do their jobs properly.

Automated guided vehicles ferry materials across the factory floor, eliminating the physical wear and tear on employees. Exoskeletons aid employees with various tasks, protecting their muscles. And robots can do the heavy lifting in the warehouse, as well as performing repetitive tasks such as picking.

The ability to use sensors and cameras to provide real-time monitoring to identify potential hazards has been a game changer as it can provide environmental monitoring. Sensors can detect harmful fumes, noise levels and dangerous temperatures. They can trigger shutdowns to prevent harm. The technology also is able to detect body issues, such as an improper use of PPE, stress levels and fatigue.

Smart helmets are keeping construction workers safety, while drones are busy inspecting dangerous areas. Drones are also keeping lone workers safer.

On top of these day-to-day operations, technology has given EHS professionals the ability to analyze data. Staffing and time constraints limit the ability to comb through massive amounts of data, yet algorithms are up to the job. Artificial intelligence, the latest step in rapidly advancing technologies, will be able to identify trends and ultimately prevent injuries.



## SAFETY IN NUMBERS

Over the past 25 years, collaboration between organizations to address specific issues has been increasing. The ability to share data, offer best practices and advocate for standards improves outcomes.



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OSHA is involved in this trend creating programs such as the Alliance Program, the OSHA Strategic Partnership Program and the popular Voluntary Protection Programs.

Collaboration also takes the form of assessment tools. The National Safety Council (NSC) joined with Avetta to launch the Safety Maturity Index, which offers a systems-based approach to target health and safety weaknesses within the supply chain to help avoid serious injuries and fatalities.

Sharing data on technology is a more recent form of collaboration. The NSC's Work to Zero program, created in 2021 with Safetytech Accelerator, shares cutting-edge research through pilots that incorporate data analytics, artificial intelligence and computer analytics. The initiative includes a free online assessment tool.

Creating coalitions is another tactic. The NSC's Road to Zero Coalition, created in 2025, is a traffic safety alliance dedicated to eliminating roadway fatalities.



### THE ROI OF SAFETY

Rick Fulwiler, president of Transformational Leadership Associates and formerly worldwide director of health and safety for consumer products giant Procter & Gamble, published an article in this magazine that set the tone for the EHS profession in the 21st century. As Fulwiler observed then, and which still very much is the case today, regulatory pressures tend to ebb and flow depending on how the political winds are blowing at any given time. What matters most to companies, and what should matter most to the EHS professionals leading their companies' safety initiatives, is the three-legged stool of People, Public Trust and Profit. Keeping workers safe not only makes it easier to attract and retain employees, and it not only builds a positive reputation, but it also (and this is when the C-suite starts to pay attention) delivers a substantial financial payback—what we call “the ROI of safety.”

The conventional wisdom holds that for every dollar spent on workplace safety, a company can expect at least a fourfold savings in terms of reduced workman's compensation costs, reduced productivity when a worker is injured or work is suspended, lost revenue from negative publicity and difficulty in attracting new workers due to a poor safety reputation, and various other bad things avoided by focusing on establishing and maintaining a culture of safety.

Taking that three-pronged model of people, public trust and profit as the formative premise, in 2002 *EHS Today* launched the **America's Safest Companies** competition. As we described it then, the goal for the new awards competition was to honor companies that went above and beyond the appearance of minimum-required compliance to “protect their employees and their bottom line through effective, well-defined safety programs, innovative solutions to challenges, a belief that safety is the ‘right thing to do,’ mutual respect between management and employees, and management commitment.”

Beginning with the Class of 2002 (which included such companies as Alcoa, General Electric, Georgia-Pacific and John Deere), to date more than 250 companies have been recognized as being one of America's Safest Companies, which among other things means they've all substantiated the financial benefits of the safety process, while achieving injury and illness rates lower than the industry average. Since winning the ASC award in 2015, industrial manufacturer Victaulic Company opted not to sit on its laurels but instead invested more than \$10 million on various safety technologies, doubled the number of full-time safety professionals, and began covering the cost of training for all employees interested in becoming emergency responders. The company was again named an ASC winner in 2024, and as William D'Amico, global director of safety and health, explained, “The ROI in these investments is not only financially measurable, but the signal sent to the employees on these investments is priceless.”



### DIGITAL TRAINING

From dial-up internet on a device the size of a carry-on suitcase to lightning-fast WiFi on a device that can fit in your back pocket, it's safe to say that we couldn't have foreseen the rapidity with which technology would develop and evolve. Nor could we have fathomed what was possible. Technology has redefined our way of living, including how we learn.

Until the 21st century, all safety training was essentially delivered in a classroom or hands-on apprenticeship setting, under the watchful tutelage of an experienced instructor. Workers either had to physically go to the training or have the training brought to them. Both options were disruptive, time-consuming and costly.

That's radically different now, thanks to computers, tablets, smartphones, virtual reality (VR) headsets, smartwatches and smart personal protective equipment (PPE).

Whether it's through the internet, cloud, software or an app, there are an ever-increasing number of ways to deliver safety training digitally, both synchronously and asynchronously. You can remotely participate in an entire degree program, hours-long certification, microlearning, periodic refreshers, gamified learning modules or 60-second safety moments.

All of this is to say that EHS professionals have many options for how best to teach and reinforce safety training for a diverse workforce using a variety of different learning styles that are minimally disruptive to operations.

It's not an either-or mindset, but a yes-and mindset. These digital devices don't replace training; rather, they are another tool that EHS professionals can use to enhance, reinforce or supplement existing safety training offerings. Thanks to digital training, EHS professionals have the ability to reach more people, including those who work by themselves or in remote areas. That's allowing organizations to stretch their dollars and potentially free up more resources for additional trainings, take



more proactive measures and ultimately make workplaces safer for more people.

There are seemingly limitless opportunities for digital training, but its effectiveness, engagement rate and long-term retention levels with employees still require a watchful eye and judicious implementation.

“It’s a time saver and a money saver, and I know a lot of in-house EHS professionals that couldn’t live without it because they don’t have enough time in the day to do what they do,” says Natalie Fox, principal scientist at Roux. “But you can’t rely on it as your only training source.

“I really do think that all these different schools of thought need to be working together. [By delivering safety training through multiple methods], you hopefully touch on enough learning styles, so everybody takes in the knowledge they need to.”



## LEADING AND LAGGING INDICATORS

Businesses have long been required to report data surrounding the number of work-related injuries and illnesses to OSHA and, in some instances, the Bureau of Labor Statistics. These metrics are lagging indicators because the numbers reflect incidents that have already happened.

Lagging indicators are one way to benchmark and compare the safety of a given business or industry with another. They helped improve safety in U.S. workplaces during the 20th century, but only to a point.

“For decades, companies have relied primarily on lagging indicators, such as total recordable injury rate, to measure safety performance,” says Perry Logan, senior director of networks at NSC. “While this approach has contributed to reducing overall injuries, it has not significantly decreased serious incident and fatality (SIF) figures, which have remained stagnant over the past decade across all industries.”

A growing number of organizations have started turning their attention from this historical measure of safety that sits in a binder, spreadsheet file or governmental database to trying to predict the future using new tools and technologies.

“To drive meaningful improvement in SIF prevention, organizations are shifting focus to proactive risk reduction strategies,” Logan says. “These efforts prioritize identifying and mitigating high-hazard activities and conditions, fostering strong leader and employee engagement, and cultivating a culture of safety ownership.”

In 2012, NSC’s Campbell institute surveyed safety leaders about leading indicators. Ever since, safety professionals have been mired in discussions about leading indicators. There’s consensus that preventing workplace injuries and fatalities is a good thing but, as is often the case, the devil is in the details.

What constitutes a good leading metric? How do you determine the ROI for machine guarding a piece of equipment? How do you calculate the potential reduction in musculoskeletal disorders as a result of a new ergonomics

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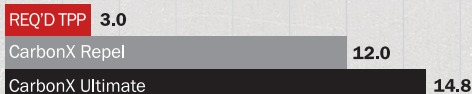
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initiative? How do multinational companies roll out meaningful change with metrics that need to be highly personal and specific to a given job or facility?

Safety professionals find themselves beholden to lagging indicators because they are a requirement and allow for easy comparison while struggling to make meaningful progress on leading indicators, because they are, by their very nature, a constantly moving target. And until or unless there is widespread agreement on how to get there, there's going to be more attempts to raise the floor—and simultaneously reach for the stars.



### TOTAL WORKER HEALTH

During the Industrial Era, workers endured long hours, low wages, dangerous working conditions, little protections and no benefits. Labor conditions improved in the 20th century thanks to governmental reforms, worker advocates and efforts by organizations such as the American Society of Safety Professionals, which was founded in response to the deadly Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire.

Today's workers have benefited from these hard-won protections, but occupational safety and health programs have long focused on worker's physical safety. That begun to change in 2006 with a revolutionary new concept: total worker health.

This approach, brought forth by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), prioritizes a hazard-free work environment as well as worker well-being. Total worker health focuses on employees' physical, mental and emotional health. It also "considers health influences that arise from outside the workplace, including interactions between work and non-work demands and circumstances," according to NIOSH's FAQ page.

In other words, total worker health recognizes that workers are human beings who are more than just their ability to perform consistent labor during their hours-long shifts. It recognizes that workers' worries, frustrations, fears and concerns about what happens in their personal lives don't disappear when they clock-in.

The concept of total worker health underscores that workers need to feel seen, heard, understood and respected to perform their best work. Total worker health supports psychological safety, the belief that workers can't be productive if they don't feel comfortable being themselves or the ability to speak freely. Instilling both requires buy-in, investment and a commitment to creating a culture of safety.

Indeed, total worker health is more than a singular idea. Rather, it's an inclusive belief in wholeness and unity, both within an individual and across the organization. It's recognizing the role of work within the totality of a person's life. **EHS**

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# The Future of Safety Training

*Key insights from the 2024 State of Safety Training Survey offer direction on how to elevate your safety program.*

**By Rick Tobin**

**T**hroughout the first half of 2024, *EHS Today* partnered with SafetyNow to produce the **2024 State of Safety Training Survey**, which offers a revealing look into the challenges and opportunities shaping workplace safety today. With input from over 5,000 safety professionals and responses from a massive outreach to more than 400,000 individuals, the findings give practical direction for anyone looking to elevate their safety programs.

Here are the key takeaways—and what they mean for you.

## THE FUTURE OF SAFETY TRAINING IS BLENDED

If you're still relying solely on traditional classroom-style safety training, it's time to rethink your approach. Over 90% of

surveyed professionals agree that blended learning—mixing live sessions, online courses, videos and other tools—makes training more engaging and effective (**Figure 1**). E-learning, in particular, has exploded in popularity, growing by 350% since 2019.

This shift isn't just about convenience; it's about delivering results. Training that combines different methods improves comprehension and retention, ensuring employees not only stay safe but also fully understand what's expected of them.

### How to make this actionable:

- » Incorporate online learning tools and interactive videos into your current training regimen.
- » Leverage industry-specific content with modern visuals to keep employees engaged.

### TACKLING COMMON SAFETY TRAINING ROADBLOCKS

What's holding safety programs back? The survey highlighted three major pain points (**Figure 2**):

1. **Employee Engagement:** Let's face it—keeping safety training interesting is no easy task. But it's essential.
2. **Resource Gaps:** Finding fresh, relevant content can be a struggle, especially in niche industries.

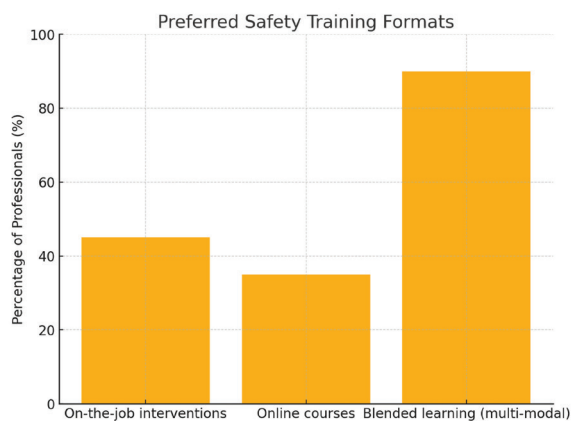


Figure 1 SAFETYNOW

3. **Management Buy-in:** Selling the value of safety training to executives is often the difference between a fully funded program and one that struggles to meet its goals.

The good news? Companies with proactive, well-structured training programs are seeing real results. Respondents reported workplace incident rates that were 74% lower than the industry average—a compelling case for investing time and resources in your safety strategy.

#### Quick wins for you:

- » Plan safety training topics at least a quarter in advance to stay proactive.
- » Use data, such as reduced incident rates or workers' comp savings, to make the case for budget and resources.

### TECHNOLOGY IS DRIVING THE NEXT WAVE OF SAFETY TRAINING

Want to future-proof your program? Go digital. The survey shows a clear trend toward online and mobile platforms that make training accessible anytime, anywhere. Flexible, adaptive systems that let you tailor training to specific roles, risks or locations are becoming the gold standard. Real-time compliance tracking and analytics tools are also on the rise, helping organizations make smarter, faster decisions.

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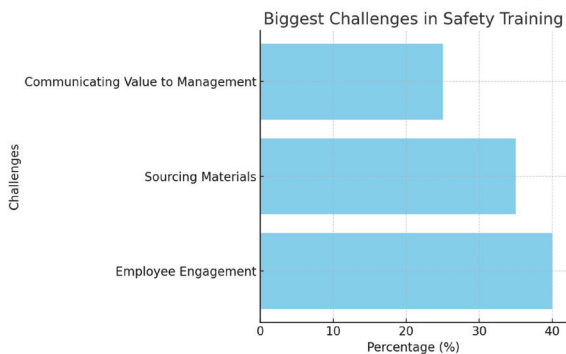
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**Figure 2** SAFETYNOW

Generative AI is transforming workplace safety training by making it smarter, more engaging and tailored to your team's needs. Imagine giving your employees access to realistic, AI-generated simulations where they can practice responding to hazards without any real-world risk. Or using AI to personalize training content for specific roles, job sites or risks—so your forklift operator gets training relevant to their daily tasks, not generic safety lessons.

AI can even analyze past incidents to predict risks and suggest proactive training modules to prevent accidents before they happen. Need quick answers to safety questions? AI-powered assistants can provide real-time guidance, reinforcing best practices on the spot. By integrating these tools, you're not just training your team—you're building a culture of safety that's dynamic, effective and future-ready.

#### Here's how you can start:

- » Explore mobile-friendly training platforms for your workforce.
- » Use learning management systems (LMS) to create customized, scalable safety plans that grow with your organization.
- » Explore and maybe implement some of the new and accessible AI chatbots to quickly and inexpensively create highly custom and compliant training that engages.

## BUILDING A STRONGER SAFETY CULTURE

Safety isn't just about reducing incidents—it's about building a culture where everyone feels invested in staying safe. Companies that prioritize regular safety meetings, blended training formats, and forward-thinking tools are seeing big improvements in morale, compliance and overall efficiency.

#### Take the next step:

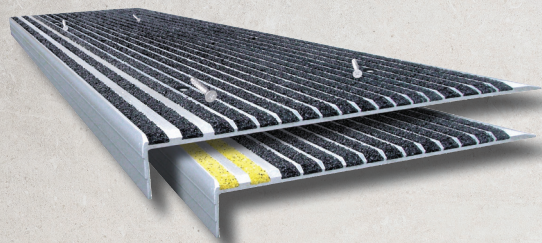
- » Schedule daily or weekly safety huddles to reinforce key practices.
- » Make safety training part of your organization's DNA by integrating it into everyday operations.

The findings from this survey are more than just statistics—they're a road map for creating safer, smarter workplaces. Whether you're just starting to modernize your safety training or looking to fine-tune an existing program, these insights can help you take meaningful, actionable steps forward.

To find out more about the **2024 State of Safety Training Survey**, or to get access to a pilot program of SafetyNow's online training, LMS and AI-enabled tools, go to [www.safetynow.com/lms-25-off/](http://www.safetynow.com/lms-25-off/). All readers instantly get 25% off. **EHS**

*Rick Tobin is president and CEO of Bongarde Media, a web-centered information and training tools company focused on the compliance and education needs of safety, environmental and human resource professionals, including SafetyNow online safety training, a partner of EHS Today's EHS Education platform. He holds multiple degrees from the University of British Columbia and the University of Edinburgh. Prior to joining Bongarde, Rick helped companies like Disney, Sterling Commerce and divisions of Lockheed Martin with online market growth while also authoring landmark research on SERP engagement, usability and UX design for companies like Google, Microsoft and Disney.*

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# PFAS Regulations in 2025: What EHS Professionals Need to Know

*Learn how to reduce exposure to dangerous substances while ensuring a healthier and safer future for everyone.*

By Bill Palmer

In 2025, environmental, health and safety (EHS) professionals are facing significant regulatory changes concerning per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). These “forever chemicals” have become a focal point for environmental agencies, with new rules and standards being implemented to address their widespread presence and potential health impacts. This article will explain what PFAS are and their implications for EHS professionals as well as provide an overview of the current regulatory landscape.

## WHAT ARE PFAS AND WHY SHOULD EHS PROFESSIONALS CARE?

PFAS are a group of man-made chemicals that have been widely used in various industries and consumer products since the 1940s. They are known for their ability to repel water and oil, making them valuable in applications such as nonstick cookware, waterproof clothing and firefighting foams.

### Important Things to Know for EHS Professionals

1. PFAS are nicknamed “forever chemicals” because they don’t break down easily in the environment or the human body.
2. Due to their extensive use, PFAS have been found in water, soil, air and even human blood samples across the globe.
3. Studies have linked PFAS exposure to various health effects, including:
  - » Changes in liver enzymes,
  - » Increased cholesterol levels,
  - » Decreased vaccine response in children and
  - » Increased risk of certain cancers (e.g., kidney and testicular).
4. The EPA and state agencies are increasingly regulating PFAS, requiring EHS professionals to stay informed about new standards and compliance requirements.
5. As regulations develop, companies may face increased liability for PFAS contamination, making it important for EHS professionals to assess and mitigate risks associated with PFAS use or historical contamination.

Understanding these key points will help EHS professionals understand the complex environment of PFAS regulations and develop appropriate strategies for their organizations.

Now, let’s look at the current regulatory developments affecting PFAS management.

## EPA’S DRINKING WATER STANDARDS

In April 2024, the EPA finalized the first-ever national drinking water standard for PFAS. This groundbreaking regulation sets legally enforceable limits for six PFAS compounds:

- » PFOA and PFOS: Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) set at 4.0 parts per trillion (ppt) each.
- » PFNA, PFHxS and GenX Chemicals: MCLs set at 10 ppt.
- » PFBS: Regulated using a hazard index calculation.

These new standards are expected to reduce PFAS exposure for approximately 100 million people and prevent thousands of deaths and serious illnesses.

## CERCLA Hazardous Substance Designation

The EPA has designated PFOA and PFOS, including their salts and structural isomers, as “hazardous substances” under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA). This designation, effective July 8, 2024, has significant implications for:

- » Reporting requirements for releases,
- » Potential liability for cleanup costs,
- » Site investigations and remediation efforts.

EHS professionals should ensure their organizations are prepared to comply with these new CERCLA obligations.

## RCRA Hazardous Constituents

The EPA is considering adding nine PFAS compounds to the list of “hazardous constituents” under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA). This potential addition could impact ongoing and future cleanup and remediation projects, requiring EHS professionals to reassess their waste management practices.



## Industrial Discharge Regulations

While not yet finalized, the EPA is expected to issue proposed rules for limiting PFAS discharges from certain industries. EHS professionals in sectors such as textiles, concentrated animal feeding operations and landfills should stay alert for upcoming Effluent Limitation Guidelines (ELGs) that may affect their operations.

## STATE-LEVEL ACTIONS

Beyond federal regulations, many states are taking initiative to address PFAS concerns. A 2024 report from Safer States estimated that 35 states would introduce policies to ban PFAS chemicals in some of their uses. These state-level actions may include:

- » Monitoring and testing of PFAS in water and sewage sludge;
- » Labeling and restrictions on firefighting equipment;
- » Bans on PFAS in food packaging, clothing and other consumer products.

EHS professionals should monitor the regulatory requirements in their respective states to ensure compliance with both federal and state-level PFAS regulations.

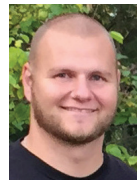
## PREPARING FOR COMPLIANCE

To ensure compliance with these new regulations, EHS professionals should:

1. Conduct thorough PFAS inventories at their facilities.
2. Evaluate current water treatment systems and upgrade if necessary.
3. Review and update spill response and reporting procedures.
4. Assess supply chains for PFAS-containing materials.
5. Stay informed about ongoing PFAS regulatory developments.

As PFAS regulations continue to change, EHS professionals have an important role in helping their organizations adjust. Our job as EHS professionals is about protecting people and the environment from exposure to harmful chemicals and ensuring compliance with applicable regulations.

By staying up to date on the latest regulations and taking action to reduce PFAS risks, EHS professionals help their companies avoid potential fines and legal problems. But more importantly, they are contributing to a bigger goal of reducing exposure to dangerous substances and ensuring a healthier, safer future for everyone. **EHS**



*Bill Palmer, MS, CSP, CHMM, is product marketing manager of Environmental & Safety with Cority, a provider of EHS and sustainability solutions. Prior to joining Cority, he was corporate EHS leader with Pilot Chemical Co.*

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# A Focus on Fall Protection

*A look at OSHA's most cited violations of 2024 shows that there's still work to be done, especially when it comes to working from heights.*

By Philip Jacklin



**W**orkplaces have undergone significant transformations in the 21st century. But you wouldn't know if you looked at the violations the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issues.

In late September, OSHA announced its annual report of their top 10 most cited violations for fiscal year 2024. Four of the top 10 most cited violations are related to fall protection. In fact, for the 14th consecutive year, fall protection general requirements remain the most cited OSHA violation.

However, 2024's report noted a significant decline in the number of violations cited. Fall protection: general requirements declined from 7,188 in 2023 to 6,307 in 2024. Ladders, fall protection training and scaffolding also saw a decrease in the number of violations. Scaffolding violations reported the most significant decline of this group, dropping from the fourth most cited violation in 2023 to eighth place this year.

Let's take a closer look at why employers struggle with fall protection standards—and what can be done to increase their compliance rates and better protect their workers.

## WHAT EXACTLY DO THE OSHA VIOLATIONS TELL US ABOUT WORKPLACE SAFETY?

It is difficult to draw concrete conclusions from this data for a couple important reasons:

- » Cited violations only indicate unsafe practices occurring in workplaces and do not reflect how many injuries or fatalities are actually occurring from said unsafe work practices.
- » OSHA's Top 10 report only reflects cited violations in states that abide by federal OSHA, not the 27 states with their own OSHA programs, such as California, Washington or Virginia, to name a few.

To complete this data and give us a clearer picture of the current state of worker safety, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) releases annual reports of workplace injuries and fatalities.

**Listen** to Philip Jacklin and Managing Editor Nicole Stempak discuss fall protection safety for an episode of *Talking EHS* podcast at <https://tinyurl.com/e2z5xbz7>

However, their data typically lags one to two years, so acquiring year-by-year data to understand the correlation between cited violations and injuries in the field is like chasing a moving target.

## WHAT ARE THE COMMON VIOLATIONS LEADING TO CITATIONS?

It's one thing to see what OSHA regulations are being violated regularly; it's another to recognize what unsafe practices lead to OSHA citations. Let's take a look at each of the four fall-related violations.

### General fall protection requirements

Regarding general fall protection requirements, OSHA agents can issue citations for simply observing at-height workers without any means of fall protection or improperly using fall protection equipment. OSHA mandates that employers provide some means of fall protection to general industry workers performing tasks at risk of falling over 4 feet to the next lower level or over 6 feet for construction workers. That could be a guardrail, a personal fall protection system or safety netting; regardless, some form of fall protection must be used above those height thresholds.

### Ladders

Regarding ladders, one of the most common violations is workers failing to maintain three points of contact when using a ladder. This can prove challenging for workers when they're using both hands to perform their tasks while standing on the ladder. Imagine the difficulty in trying to change an overhead light bulb while always keeping one hand on the ladder! Nonetheless, OSHA requires workers to constantly maintain three points of contact when using a ladder. Many ladder manufacturers now offer platform ladders with integrated safety railings around the top of the ladder to decrease the worker's chance of falling. Those integrated railings can be considered a guardrail and allow workers to use both hands for their tasks without violating OSHA code.

Another common ladder violation regards proper setup. OSHA requires a 4:1 ratio when using extension ladders; in other words, for every four feet the ladder extends vertically, it must extend 1 foot away from the structure. For example, the base of a 12-foot ladder should be placed 3 feet away from the structure for optimal stabilization.



### Fall protection training

Fall protection training comes in many forms but must be a documented part of every organization's fall protection program. For example, OSHA requires employers to designate Authorized Users before employees are permitted to perform work at-heights. This type of initial fall protection training must (at minimum) educate the designated employees on the specific fall hazards present at their work site, how to identify them, and how to use their equipment properly.

Further, employers must retrain employees after any of the following:

- » a change to the work environment occurs,
- » new equipment/systems are being utilized, or
- » an employee displays a gap of understanding that prevents them from working safely.

Employers must document when training sessions occur and the employees who are permitted to use fall protection equipment.

### Scaffolding

Lastly, many components are involved in proper scaffold erection and operation, but one common violation seen in the field is failure to provide fall protection to employees. Per OSHA, employers must provide fall protection to scaffold workers who are 10 feet or more above the ground. Many scaffold manufacturers offer integrated anchorages in the scaffold assembly or can integrate horizontal lifelines for workers to tie-off.

## WHAT CAN BE DONE TO IMPROVE WORKER SAFETY?

There are many ways to increase the effectiveness of safety and fall protection programs immediately.

One of the best strategies for employers is to bolster their training program. Training programs educate workers on how to use their equipment properly and reinforce the importance of using fall protection consistently. A 2021 study conducted by the Center for Construction Research & Training (CPWR) found that employees were eight times more likely to use fall protection equipment if they believed their company required its use.

Training programs also help address concerns from frontline workers that may not be obvious to safety leadership.

Too often, safety managers can become overwhelmed by administrative tasks, responding to violations or investigating past incidents. And unfortunately, that means they cannot devote the time and attention to proactively making their facilities or job sites safer. Training sessions offer a unique opportunity for employees to ask questions, advocate for their needs and propose solutions that could protect them from everyday hazards.

Another way to immediately improve fall protection programs is to perform routine fall hazard surveys of the facility or jobsite. Some organizations utilize OSHA consultation programs, which are available in most states for companies that want to ensure their facilities meet minimum regulatory compliance standards. Others choose to invite their safety equipment suppliers or fall protection manufacturers to their facility to perform assessments and provide options for solutions. Manufacturer partners can help organizations meet minimum OSHA standards as well as suggest solutions to exceed compliance.

Exceeding minimum compliance is likely the only way true progress will be made in the effort to improve worker safety. While adhering to OSHA requirements is a must, being mindful of ANSI/ASSP Z359 guidelines and other consensus standards will help bolster corporate safety policies by aligning with the manufacturers of the fall protection equipment workers utilize.

## HOW DO I USE OSHA DATA TO MAKE MY WORKPLACE SAFER?

While the decrease in overall fall protection OSHA citations is encouraging, falls remain one of the leading causes of workplace injuries and fatalities. A slight decline in reported violations is simply not enough to drive the meaningful change desperately needed to improve worker safety.

This data shows that many organizations still struggle to meet minimum OSHA requirements for workers who must use fall protection. The first step to preventing fall injuries and fatalities is to focus on bolstering the equipment, training and culture so that fall protection is taken seriously.

Companies that have already done so will be the future leaders of their industries; they have demonstrated that they prioritize worker safety by integrating proactive fall protection methods into their standard operating procedures. Investing in fall protection programs is a sign that a company is committed to investing in its most important asset: its people. **EHS**

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*Philip Jacklin is continuing education program manager for Diversified Fall Protection. He is an AIA continuing education provider, QSSP certified, OSHA-30 trained and has been a partner to the fall protection industry since 2018. Jacklin has a background in worker advocacy, team leadership and fostering camaraderie among peers.*



# THE DANGERS




## of Confined Spaces

*All workers need preparation and protection, especially those working in confined spaces.*

**By Gen Handley**

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**B**enjamin Franklin famously once said, “By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail” but nowhere is this statement clearer—or riskier—than when it comes to worker safety. The more employers can prepare and plan their workers’ safety now, the more successful their safety programs will be down the road. The more updates that employers can make on their existing safety plans and protocols, the more peace of mind they—and their workers—will have when work is being performed.

This applies to working safely in confined spaces. It also applies to the most significant hazard that threatens workers in confined spaces: the lack of preparation and awareness of important occupational procedures and protocols. This encompasses all industries in which its people are required to perform tasks in these high-risk areas or permit-required confined spaces, or spaces that both meet the definition of a confined space and present significant health and safety hazards to those working there.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, at least 100 workers die each year from injuries involving confined spaces, such as tanks (of all kinds), ditches and trenches, tunnels, and crawl spaces, among others.

### THE NEED FOR A CONFINED SPACE SAFETY PROGRAM

OSHA defines confined spaces as areas that are not designed for people but are large enough for people to enter and perform specific tasks, also stating that “a confined space also has limited or restricted means for entry or exit and is not designed for continuous occupancy.”

Working in confined spaces can be dangerous because the configuration and composition limits the activities of people working in those spaces, as well their entrance and exit. These tight spaces can present a comprehensive range of occupational hazards.

Employers need to develop a confined space safety program if work is being done regularly in confined spaces. Such a program must outline all related protocols and policies for safe work, such as personal protective equipment (PPE), rescue procedures, communication requirements and all identified confined spaces.

The program should also include essential documents, such as entry permit forms required for permit-required confined spaces in work areas that present one or more of the following occupational hazards:

- » contains or has the potential to contain a hazardous atmosphere;
- » contains material that has the potential to engulf an entrant;
- » has walls that converge inward or floors that slope downward and taper into a smaller area, which could trap or asphyxiate an entrant; or
- » contains any other recognized safety or health hazard, such as unguarded machinery, exposed live wires or heat stress.

A compliant confined space safety program outlines policies and procedures that track and limit workers’ time in these spaces, with requirements and reminders for regular breaks and hydration; wearables and smart PPE that can measure biometrics, such as hydration levels, helping monitor these breaks and the person’s safety. Also, the employer must provide the proper training to the workers and provide permission to only certain employees who are known as authorized entrants.

Working in confined spaces can present two types of hazards: physical and atmospheric.

Physical hazards include the following:

- » falling equipment and debris;
- » heavy, collapsing materials, such as grain and soil;
- » drowning and flooding; and
- » uncomfortable and cramped working conditions.



Atmospheric hazards on the other hand, cannot be seen. These include dangers such as:

- » oxygen deficiency;
- » flammable and toxic gases, such as hydrogen sulfide.

Even though they are invisible, atmospheric hazards can still be identified through gas detection and documented before they hurt anyone.

All worksite hazards—both physical and atmospheric—should be regularly assessed, and training materials should also be regularly updated to ensure workers' safety.

## 5 CONSIDERATIONS FOR CONFINED SAFETY PROGRAMS

As you work to write, or update, your confined safety program, here are some things to keep in mind:

### 1. Determine where your confined spaces are located.

On top of these existing hazards of confined spaces, an important step often missed during risk and hazard assessments is identifying the worksites of existing confined spaces that may require employees to enter and perform work. The worker's well-being is put at risk when they are not aware that they are going to work in a confined space and therefore do not take the proper precautions beforehand.

### 2. Remember that these people are working alone.

It is a major misconception that because an employee is working with co-workers located nearby, they are not alone. However, due to the constraints of the confined working space, the employee could be considered a lone worker because they may not be able to request help if they need it in an accident and are separated by a physical barrier that could impact emergency response.

### 3. Plan both the entry and exit.

When preparing for safe confined space work, most employers focus on the work and activity itself. However, the dangers of confined space work also include any potential challenges with entry and exit, especially if emergency aid is needed.

It is important to plan at least one, if not multiple, entry and

exits for both the worker and emergency contact, as well as to provide training to both parties. During an emergency response or rescue, seconds matter; having a well-planned exit could be the difference between life and death.

### 4. Recognize that extreme temperatures pose a serious threat.

A major physical hazard of working in tight spaces is extreme fluctuations in temperatures, both hot and cold. After assessing and identifying the confined spaces, it is important to determine the eventual working temperatures in these spaces so that the proper safety measures can be prepared.

In the case of hot temperatures, workers should wear lightweight, breathable clothing. Employers can provide temporary makeshift stations or rooms where workers can cool down. There should also be proper ventilation to increase air flow in the small space. In spaces with toxic gases where fans cannot be used, workers may require cooling packs and towels.

In the case of cold temperatures, workers should wear warm and dry clothing and, as appropriate, heating packs. There may also need to be heat sources either where the work is occurring or in makeshift stations or room where workers can go to warm up.

### 5. Anticipate and adapt your plans.

Ultimately, the key to successful confined-work safety is to anticipate future challenges and hazards as much as possible. This includes evaluating the workplace of confined spaces and occupational hazards and using that information to protect these people who are putting themselves in dangerous work environments or potentially uncomfortable situations.

## COMBAT COMPLACENCY

By having a well-thought plan and leveraging technology, safety managers can enhance confined space programs, making operations safer, more efficient—and more responsive to potential hazards. **EHS**

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*Gen Handley is a marketing and growth coordinator for SafetyLine Lone Worker, an automated, cloud-based lone worker monitoring service.*



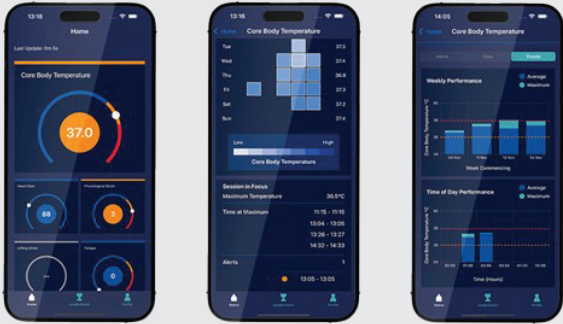
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# NEW PRODUCTS



### Safety App

Bodytrak has launched a mobile app to bring real-time physiological insights directly to users. Employers can configure the new user app to provide employees with a live feed of their own health data, including core body temperature, heart rate, physiological strain and fatigue level. Employees will continue to receive audio prompts when they exceed safe thresholds, but now they also have real-time access to their data. They can also see their body's health data over time, including the number of alerts triggered over specific periods and the amount of time spent in different states. Bodytrak's new app operates alongside the alerts supervisors already receive through Dashboard, text, email and WhatsApp.

**Bodytrak**  
[bodytrak.co](http://bodytrak.co)

### Women's Jacket

RefrigiWear's softshell jacket for women can be worn on its own or layered for maximum warmth. The jacket features a lightweight, water-repellent and wind-tight outershell that offers flexibility and ease of movement. A polyester microfleece lining designed to keep wearers' warm down to 20 degrees Fahrenheit. The full-zip stand-up collar and straight-hemmed cuffs provide a secure, comfortable fit. Two zippered front pockets offer convenient storage. Zip up this jacket and be ready for whatever the day brings.

**RefrigiWear**  
[refrigiwear.com](http://refrigiwear.com)



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## EDITORIAL STAFF

**Dave Blanchard**  
Editor-in-Chief  
(941) 208-4370  
dblanchard@endeavorb2b.com

**Adrienne Selko**  
Senior Editor  
aselko@endeavorb2b.com

**Nicole Stempak**  
Managing Editor  
(682) 257-3371  
nstempak@endeavorb2b.com

**David Sparkman**  
Contributing Editor  
dspark@comcast.net

**Kermit Mulkins**  
Art Director

**Robert Schoenberger**  
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rschoenberger@endeavorb2b.com

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Nicole  
Stempak  
Managing Editor



## A Commitment to Caring

*We must recognize all we have done while simultaneously striving to do better.*

Over the holidays, I had the privilege of watching my friend's dog while she and her husband visited out-of-state family. I have been entrusted with Cocoa's care several times before, and I never take it for granted. It is a big responsibility to care for someone else's beloved companion, but it's also a great gift.

This visit was filled with cuddles, presents and freshly boiled chicken—same as always. But Cocoa's most recent stay was imbued with greater significance.

Cocoa is still the sweet and sassy girl I know and love, but I was forced to acknowledge that she's now a senior dog. She doesn't fly up and down the steps. In fact, I was so worried about her slipping or hurting herself on our hardwood stairs that I carried her.

I also had to find new ways to communicate with Cocoa since she has lost much of her hearing. I found that making eye contact, putting on my coat and waving were effective ways to prevent startling her, tell her it's time for a walk and have her follow me.

These gestures only worked because Cocoa trusts me completely. I am fortunate to have known Cocoa since my friend rescued her about 12 years ago. During that time, and in our many visits together, I have proven that I will make sure she is warm, dry and fed. I will give her plenty of belly rubs, play tug or fetch with her, and let her lead us on our walks. In exchange, she lets me brush her fur, touch her paws, and remove her eye crusties. She does not let most people do these things, and I'm honored to be an exception.

As any pet parent or human parent knows, caregiving is a round-the-clock job. I found myself waking up at odd hours, checking to make sure she was alright and keeping tabs on how much she ate and drank. I also found myself wanting to be a better person, the person I thought she deserved.

Once, I was on the verge of tears because I felt like I had failed her. My partner gently said something to the effect of

"Look at Cocoa, asleep next to you. She's fine! I don't think you did anything wrong, but even if you had, she's clearly forgiven you."

When you care for another, it's all too easy to focus on your shortcomings, real or imagined. In times like these, it's difficult to see that the very act of showing up, trying your best and loving unconditionally proves you are worthy of the responsibility bestowed upon you. It is both awe-inspiring and awesome.

There are so many lessons to be learned from others, including pets. I found that while I didn't sleep as good as I normally do, I wasn't all that tired. Beyond a mere duty or obligation to take care of Cocoa, I felt like I had a purpose. Yes, it can be stressful and overwhelming at times, but seeing her smile, swish her tail and play with her Lamb Chop is worth it everything, every single time.

To a certain extent, I imagine this is how you must feel most days as safety professionals. You create programs, conduct training, purchase personal protective equipment and install technology to keep people safe on the job. You spend your days thinking of new, better and more ways to protect your colleagues. You get frustrated when your warnings are not heeded because—more so than any fines or citations—you dread the phone call, text or alert that there's been an accident.

You put your whole heart and self into caring for others, making sure their physical, emotional and mental needs are met. You worry you're not doing enough while also doing everything you can to make workplaces safer.

You have every reason and right to be worried about the potential safety risks and to focus on mitigating them. Still, I suggest you take a cue from Cocoa and pause to enjoy this present moment. Recognize—and be proud of—your accomplishments, for which there are many. Even when it doesn't feel like you've done enough remember that those you care for know how you feel, trust you because of your past words and deeds, and care for you in return.

*Nicole Stempak*

Send an e-mail with your thoughts to [nstempak@endeavorb2b.com](mailto:nstempak@endeavorb2b.com).





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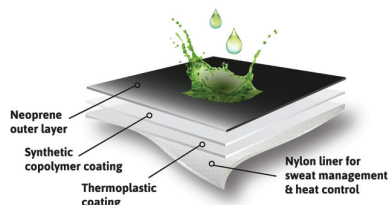
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