

Safety On The Edge

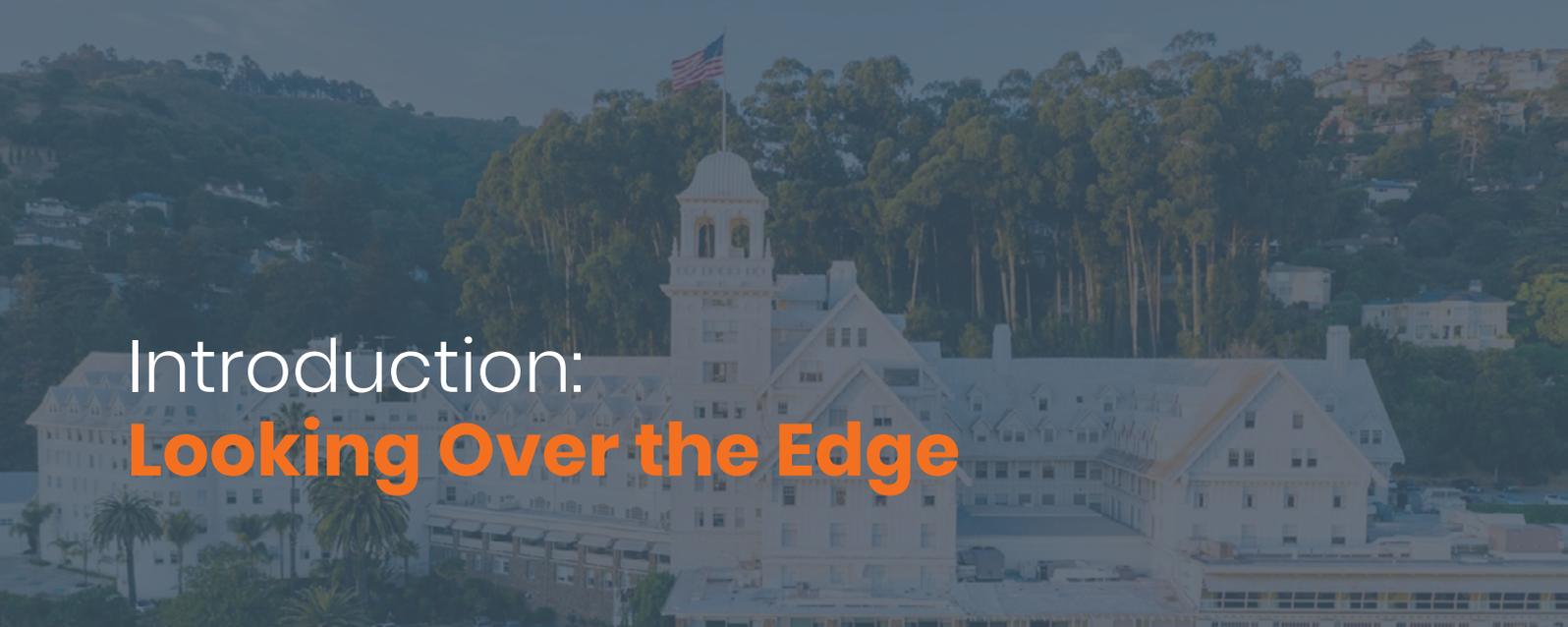


GLOBAL FORUM 25



# Safety on The Edge Global Forum 2025

26–27 March 2025, Claremont Hotel,  
Berkeley, California



# Introduction: Looking Over the Edge

**Two years ago, Malcolm Staves and Corrie Pitzer created the concept of Safety On The Edge (SOTE) as an event designed by safety leaders for safety leaders. To make the concept a reality they set up a not-for-profit global forum, to raise the standard of discourse about worker and organizational safety and to recognize academic luminaries whose research underpins safety practitioners' work.**

The inaugural event was perfect proof of the value of that concept. It was an extraordinary coming together at Berkeley, California, of some of the world's most experienced and knowledgeable safety professionals with the thinkers whose concepts and research continue to drive safety practice.

The alignment of messages from the array of presenters and panellists was remarkable; strong themes threaded through the two days of presentations. Speaker after speaker emphasised the criticality of psychological safety as the foundation of a solid safety culture; if employees do not feel valued and recognized they will never fully engage in health and safety programs. As Andresa Hernandez at Siemens put it, ensuring "people are at the center of our operations" is key to meeting future challenges.

Prioritizing hazards correctly to protect workers against the most serious injuries and fatalities (SIFs) was another strong thread, established by Georgia Power CEO Kimberley Greene in her powerful opening session. Debates ranged across Human Operational Performance (HOP), the impact of artificial intelligence and the importance of safeguarding mental health. These insights, along with the conversations between delegates outside the main sessions, will be the engines of future safety and health improvements in many organisations.

As well as providing a platform for the sharpest ideas in safety, health and wellbeing, the event was an opportunity to celebrate the highest-performing organizations and to celebrate the careers and contributions of four of the titans of safety research (see p19). The following pages offer highlights of all the sessions from the global forum's first day, plus selected sessions from the second day.

Corrie and Malcolm are proud to have been able to give their support to a professional event, a conference truly on the edge.

*"We give our sincere thanks to Jamie Young and Scott Cuthbert of Safeopedia, Eric Gislason and Jon Knight at the National Association of Safety Professionals, Micki Maclean of Safemap, event planner Dal Palmer and Kathy Seabrook from Global Solutions Inc for their unwavering support and their time in making SOTE happen.*

*We look forward to welcoming you at the next in-person Safety On The Edge conference in May 2026."*

**Malcolm Staves and Corrie Pitzer**

# Opening Session: A New Era

**“Welcome to the future,” said Malcolm Staves greeting delegates from all over the US and Europe at the opening of the inaugural Safety On The Edge (SOTE) Global Forum in Berkeley, California on 26 April.**

Malcolm, who is Global Vice President Health & Safety at beauty products multinational L’Oréal, said he had often wondered why academia and industry did not work more closely, for researchers to learn from practice and for businesses to test new academic theories. *“So that’s everything that we want you to do with SOTE, and that’s why we’re here today.”*

He said that delegates would have two days to benefit from the experience of a stellar line-up of speakers but also from each other’s expertise. *“I know that every single solution to each one of your problems is somewhere in this room,”* he said.

Malcolm thanked the conference’s sponsors: dss+, American Society of Safety Professionals (ASSP), Intelx, Krause Bell Group, L’Oréal, the National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and health (NEBOSH), the National Safety Council (NSC), the National Association of Safety Professionals Pixaera, Protex AI, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), Safemap International, Safeopedia, Shirley Parsons Associates, Veriforce and Voxxel. He noted all SOTE’s supporters’ respect for a model that let the conference content take precedence over sponsors’ messages.

Kim Altom, Global Operations Risk Management Practice Director of Diamond sponsor dss+ added her support, saying she believed collaboration was essential to solve the complex health and safety challenges organisations faced and that lasting change was only possible if it involved all levels in a business from the shopfloor to the executive suite.



Malcolm’s co-founder of Safety On The Edge, leadership and culture consultant Corrie Pitzer listed the multiple “edges”, the event would address, from the “front edge” of technological transformation including use of artificial intelligence and automation and the “cliff edge” of risk for business, through to the “cutting edge” of ideas and the “leading edge of best practice.

*“You will see some very pioneering ideas coming through,”* he promised. *“This is what we want to be. We want to get the cutting edge of ideas. We want to be disrupted, but not in a negative sense. We want to break a new ground.”*

He emphasised that any profits from the event would go to charity and thanked the speakers for agreeing to waive fees. *“We are very grateful for that, so that they can come and share their views, their pioneering ideas.”*

*We want to get the cutting edge of ideas.  
We want to be disrupted, but not in a negative  
sense. We want to break a new ground.*

**Corrie Pitzer**

# Kimberley Greene: View From the Top

**“I want all of these safety professionals here to know that you must be bold when you are talking with your leadership and they are not hearing you,” said Kimberley Greene. “Don’t give up. Be persistent, be bold.”**

Kimberley’s words were all the more resonant with delegates because she is not a safety practitioner, she is CEO of Georgia Power, part of Southern Company, the biggest utility provider in the south of the US.

Kimberley told delegates that she wanted to start her presentation with a statement that was “a little provocative”: “That is, that in that in 2024 our company’s total recordable incident rate was the highest it had been in over 20 years. And I believe our company is safer than ever.” In explanation, she took delegates through Georgia Power’s safety journey, starting in 2003 when the total recordable incident rate (TRIR) was 2.33 per million hours worked but, critically, the company experienced four worker fatalities. “Our CEO called all of our officers into a meeting,” Kimberley recalled, “and he looked all of us in the eye and said, ‘This is unacceptable, and this is not a worker problem. This is a leadership problem, and you all need to go fix this.’” The result was a behavior-based safety program that put the emphasis on employees staying safe by simply doing the right things, along with a “Target Zero” drive to minimize accidents. “Our warped view safety was humans will not make a mistake if you just behave perfectly,” said Kimberley. By 2013, the TRIR had dropped to 0.57 but the serious injuries and fatalities rate showed no similar fall. “So while we’re doing what we think is a good job of stamping out the small things, people are still dying at about the same rate,” she said.

A safety culture survey by Corrie Pitzer’s Safemap International revealed the organization was not as advanced as it had believed and this led to the launch of a new Safety First programme and the development of a safety and health management system that prioritised employees speaking up about risk and learning from all incidents. The link between pay and TRIR was removed for managers, “Which was not an easy move,” she said. Now, employees are trained to manage the critical risks the company has identified as its main vulnerabilities.





The culture of psychological safety and openness to learning from incidents had resulted in a rise in the TRIR from around 0.6 ten years ago to 1.6 in 2024 but in the same period the serious incident rate had fallen from 0.14 to a steady 0.05 in 2021 to 2024. Kimberley said that in 2024, when hurricane Helena ripped through Georgia cutting off electricity to much of the state's population Georgia Power's 10,000 employees became effectively emergency service workers, willing to do whatever it took to restore light and power. Her message to the workforce was that, whatever pressure they came under from mayors or city officials, "You stay safe. I've got your back". She had impressed on them: "If it takes you an extra day, takes you an extra five hours, I want you to have the opportunity to restore power after another hurricane." As the most senior leaders, she said, showing real emotion. "That is what we must do, make sure that our employees know we have their backs. The most important thing is their safety. I don't care about our financial results or our operational results."

In response to a delegate's question about how HSE professionals can sway senior leadership to take safety seriously and fund improvements, Kimberley said there was a business case to be made as well as a moral one: "We have the cold, hard facts that show we are spending less because we are a safer organization."

*In 2024 our company's total recordable incident rate was the highest it had been in over 20 years. And I believe our company is safer than ever.*

**Kimberley Greene**

# Business growth: **A Matter of Principle**

**A session helmed by a trio of chief executives of the major US safety bodies introduced delegates to a recently-launched set of core safety principles for efficient business. Introducing the panel, Jennifer McNelly, CEO of the ASSP said the principles had been developed at the request of the Intersociety Forum, an informal group made up of herself and the heads of 13 other bodies including the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA), the Institute of Hazardous Materials Management, the National Electrical Contractors Association, the National Safety Council (NSC). The group was an informal “coalition of the willing that care”, said Jennifer.**

The three core principles are detailed in a document titled *Driving Business Growth and Profitability Through Modern Occupational Environmental Health and Safety Practices* (<https://tinyurl.com/mvczsndw>) said Jennifer. They were the result of a shared sense of the need to “change the conversation” about the value of occupational safety.

Lorraine Martin, President and CEO of the NSC picked up on Kimberley Greene’s earlier story of Georgia Power’s safety transformation, saying that the statement of principles was needed because “*what we thought was helping us make people safe today, we know, is not necessarily sufficient and, in some cases, is actually causing wrong behavior.*”

The three CEOs each explained one of the core principles.

**Principle 1. Business-driven practice: Standards and worker wellbeing** – The key message for this principle is that safety is not just about compliance; it is about creating standards that foster business

success while promoting holistic worker health. Jennifer said this principle highlighted the criticality of boards in setting direction for safety, the importance of following established industry standards and best practice, and the value to be gained from worker engagement. “*Thinking about business operations, safety management systems and following what we know works, and that’s why the focus on industry-based standards, on leading practices and on creating pathways while recognizing the entire worker,*” she said.

**Principle 2. Beyond Compliance: Embracing risk and safety management systems** – The key message here is that modern occupational EHS practices go beyond checking a box. They help organizations proactively mitigate risk and embed safety into every aspect of decision making. AIHA CEO Larry Sloan looked at the principle through his own industrial hygiene lens and said health and safety professional needed to build a business case for going beyond statutory minima in exposing workers to health hazards and to implement better controls.



Jennifer McNelly

**Principle 3. Leading Indicators: Revolutionising recordkeeping for predictive insights** – Traditional lagging indicators such as incident rates only tell part of the story; leading indicators empower organizations to predict and prevent serious injuries, illnesses and fatalities. Lorraine noted that government-mandated safety metrics don't give a full picture of an organization's state of workplace risk. *"Let's measure what does tell us whether we have a safe environment or not,"* she said. *"Leading indicators ... tell us what things might happen to us."* The challenge, she said was to wean non-safety leaders off their reliance on accident rates and to educate them about the value of measuring inputs and non-incidents such as near-misses. The NSC had created a C-suite briefing document that could make the task easier, she said (<https://tinyurl.com/4t6rmmvf>).

Lorraine called on the safety leaders in the room to contribute to building the leading indicators that would help businesses be resilient and safe. *"Tell us what things might happen to us,"* she said. *"Focus us on predicting and preventing the highest risks our environments that are likely to kill someone."*



L-R Larry Sloan, Lorraine Martin

*What we thought was helping us make people safe today, we know, is not necessarily sufficient and, in some cases, is actually causing wrong behavior.*

**Lorraine Martin**



# Panel: Prioritizing Healthy Minds

**Safeguarding workers' mental health and wellbeing as a key to business success was the theme of a panel session chaired by Liz Horvath, Senior Advisor, Psychological Health and Safety, at Mental Health Canada. Liz likened some employers' approaches to dealing with mental health to a community on the edge of a sheer cliff that builds a clinic at the bottom of the drop to look after people when they have fallen. "We know that the workplace impacts mental health more than anything else, so we have an opportunity to make a real difference in the workplace," she said.**

Georgia Bryce-Hutchinson, Workplace Mental Health Consultant and Trainer with Building Families According to Pattern, said that as a clinician she often dealt with the employees of organizations that took the clinic-at-the-bottom-of-the-cliff approach and that sometimes she had to sign them off work for extended periods. *"If you don't have systems in place to tend to your employees, mental health and wellbeing as you do physical health, you're going to run into a person like myself,"* she warned.



L-R Dee Arp, Georgia Bryce-Hutchinson

Liz said there was more risk to business than just lost time to mental health conditions, citing a study of more than 3000 construction companies that found that stressed workers were around 3.5 times more prone to serious injuries than their less-stressed colleagues.



Pam Walaski

Pam Walaski, outgoing President of the ASSP, said from her experience of talking to safety managers, they were concerned about the risks stressed workers faced and presented, *"but they don't feel equipped to deal with it"*. As with the switch to measuring leading indicators raised by Lorraine Martin in the morning's second session, she said the challenge was to convince senior leaders to take the issue of stress management seriously and to resource it.

Part of the barrier to better mental health support, argued fellow panellist Dee Arp, Chief Quality Officer of NEBOSH, included residual stigma surrounding mental health issues. *“People are afraid of being judged, are afraid of using the resources that are in place,”* said Dee. She and Georgia both highlighted stories of individuals whose managers, through lack of training had responded inappropriately to pleas for help from vulnerable employees. *“Your managers and supervisors may need to become a little bit more aware about the symptoms of a mental illness,”* said Georgia, *“and just helping them understand what that looks like, and having conversations with somebody who may be impacted, that’s where the focus needs to be.”*

Liz noted that Mental Health Canada has trained people in more than 1600 organizations in mental health awareness and psychological safety. Dee added that it was important for organizations to measure whether there was a gap between their safety management system and their safety culture and if there was to find out how much of that was due to a lack of psychological safety in the workforce. Pam highlighted the value of the ISO 45003 guidance standard on maintaining workplace psychosocial health ([www.iso.org/standard/64283.html](http://www.iso.org/standard/64283.html)), which she noted was a useful framework even for organizations not certified to the ISO 45001 health and safety management systems standard. Georgia added a recommendation of the US Surgeon General’s framework on workplace mental health and wellbeing (<https://tinyurl.com/ynxa23st>).

A delegate raised the issue of individual privacy and disclosure of mental health issues. *“I don’t think that we’re asking the organization to dig into private information,”* said Pam, explaining that it was important that employers knew when to refer people in need out to professionals they could talk to in confidence. *“It has to do with your policies, your trust, building that trust,”* added Liz.



Liz Horvath

Another delegate asked about the link between psychological safety and its underlying aim of employees being able to express their whole selves at work, and diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI) policies. Pam noted that some of the current challenges to DEI initiatives from voices that decry them as “woke” actually give employers the opportunity to assess whether their definitions of diversity have been too narrowly drawn and to check that the policies are not just geared towards women or neurodiverse employees, for example, but all groups within the workforce who might be disadvantaged.

*Your managers and supervisors may need to become a little bit more aware about what are the symptoms of a mental illness.*

**Georgia Bryce-Hutchinson**



# Todd Conklin: Beyond Risk

**Todd Conklin used his keynote to deliver a strong message about the need to reframe safety as more than a risk management issue.**

*"I want to collectively tell you that I think our biggest problem as a community of thought, globally located, is our definition of success is wrong,"* warned Conklin, who is Senior Advisor at Los Alamos National Laboratory, but also a bestselling author and in demand as a safety speaker all over the world. *"The people who count on us to do what we do every single day, they kind of are still operating in this idea of the old definition."*

The least interesting part of a safety and health professionals' work was managing risk, he argued: *"Most of you in this room represent workers who interface with risk every single day. It's a part of their job. It's not unique or special, it's constantly changing. It's incredibly dynamic, and it abhors a vacuum."* Removing one hazard exposed at least two more, and most health and safety professionals knew it, he said, but they needed to make it clearer to leadership teams. *"I think we tell them, this is a game not of risk management,"* Todd said. *"This is a game of control."*



He said that it was important to remain aware that improvement in safety was *"a deliberate strategy"*, and that leadership teams had to be committed to that improvement. To try to change behavior through training about specific hazards or through safety stand-downs was not the way to drive better performance. **"Workers don't make bad decisions; workers are given bad decisions,"** he said. *"This next part of the journey is not about changing how workers do work,"* he emphasised. *"It's about changing how organizations manage operations, and that idea is really important."*

The task for safety specialists, he said was to provide senior executives with a new set of questions to ask about safety performance: *"The power you have is in guiding the question. It's not having the answer."* He said leaders needed to be challenged not to look for places where risk was elevated but where controls were poor. *"Have them look for places where we interface with risk with great regularity, but we're not ready for it to fail,"* he advised.

Changing leaders' focus from risk to controls took persistence he warned: *"you'll have these conversations hundreds of times with the same people until they start to stick."*

*This is a game not of risk management,  
this is a game of control.*

**Todd Conklin**

# Lorraine Martin: The Right Indicators

NSC CEO Lorraine Martin used her second appearance at the conference to emphasize the importance of organizations doubling down on serious injury and fatality (SIF) risks and controls. Speaking just after the 114th anniversary of the New York Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire which claimed 146 lives and led to a strengthening of US safety regulation and the formation of the NSC, Lorraine said the disaster had prompted a “huge leap forward for safety”, but that too many people were still dying at work.

She echoed the morning’s other speakers saying that taking confidence from lagging indicators such as falling incident rates was false comfort when the risk of serious incidents had not diminished. She offered the example of BP’s Deepwater Horizon drilling rig which had won safety awards for its safety record before the explosion and fire in 2010 that killed 11 people and polluted the Gulf of Mexico with 134 million gallons of oil.

*“So when tragedies like this can occur in a safety award-winning organization, what does that say?”* Lorraine asked. *“It tells us our data is not necessarily doing what it needs to do. We’re not saving more lives today than we did literally a decade ago.”*

Focusing on SIF prevention in the way that Kimberley Greene at Southern Company had earlier outlined, was *“the next leap in safety that we will all have to make together,”* Lorraine said. She asked how many delegates’ organizations had already launched SIF prevention measures; around one in five indicated they had. She thanked them and said they would be key to showing the remainder the way. The NSC had



already modelled the SIF-prevention work of some major companies and published case studies, she said (see <https://tinyurl.com/599t9rus>).

The required shift in thinking would not be easy, she warned. *“It really requires a significant change in our mindset. It’s about digging through the stuff that we can’t easily see, that hasn’t happened yet, and moving past being reactive to the things that just happened in our workplace, so that we can prevent those injuries and fatalities from happening.”*



Trying to head off risks before they eventuated was not about crystal-ball gazing, said Lorraine, but it required a change of focus towards leading indicators and sensitivity to the precursors of serious events that gave the necessary clues as to where they could occur. Critical to the hazard tracking and control process, she said, was employee involvement: *"You need to rely on the people who have the eyes on your work site, and that means your workers absolutely need to feel safe, to speak up when they see something unsafe, and that is a challenge for a lot of work environments."*

She re-emphasised Todd Conklin's earlier call to convince senior executives of the need to change their perspective on safety and said that, as advocates for that change, delegates should not think of themselves as safety professionals or as managers or department heads: *"You're an innovator, you're a leader, and you're a risk taker in the right way."*

*"As the word safety changes, evolves and is redefined," she concluded, "it's our task now to keep that movement going, to push it, that next piece forward, to take the next leap and to continue truly, until we lose no lives at work, in any workplace ... This is our time, just like it was 114 years ago to spark the next safety movement. We know what it is that we see it. It's time for us to lean in and make it happen."*





# Kathleen Sutcliffe: **Stay Flexible**

**“Safety is a dynamic non-event,” said Kathleen Sutcliffe, Bloomberg Distinguished Professor of Medicine and Business at Johns Hopkins University. “It’s dynamic in part because it’s preserved by timely human adjustments, but it’s a non-event, and as a non-event, successful outcomes don’t really call attention to themselves. I don’t think that we have a complete understanding of all the factors that are contributing to safety, but we do know that adaptability is critical.”**

Flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances was the central theme of her session, but she started by musing on the tendency of individuals and organizations to *“obsess about and exaggerate the risks of events that are far beyond our control”*, while underestimating the risks of controllable events. *“I’m not saying do away with risk management,”* Kathleen explained ... *but I am saying is that when we focus on the extreme, we miss what’s in front of us,”* she said.

On the need for adaptability, she cited the results of a study into varying mortality rates at hospitals. The differences could not be accounted for by differing levels of risk controls or prevention of post-surgical complications, she noted. Instead, *“low-mortality hospitals were much more proficient at recognizing and managing serious complications as they unfolded”*. Low death rates were mostly attributable to the medical teams’ ability to spot and react quickly to emerging problems. *“It’s a process of recursive interactions between sensing, interpreting, updating and acting in a dynamic unfolding situation,”* she said.



Resilience *“takes daily practices that help people stay alert and stay aware of disruptions and weak signals so that they can more quickly anticipate things that might go wrong,”* she added.

*When we focus on the extreme,  
we miss what’s in front of us.*

**Kathleen Sutcliffe**

She said she had found four common attributes in organizations that managed safety well. The first was careful selection of staff, not just for expertise but for interpersonal skills. Such organizations also tended to put heavy emphasis on continuous training and mentoring, she noted. The second attribute was about the quality of the way people interrelated. The greater sense each person had from others about what was happening around them – “upstream and downstream” – the better they could coordinate – “but I’m thinking about it more broadly is we want to help people understand what’s happening upstream and downstream, so they can coordinate better.” The third attribute was operating to a set of principles that included being sensitive what can go wrong and has gone wrong in a process. She cited a space station commander who had told her he would check in with his fellow astronauts throughout the day, asking them if things were going to plan and whether they needed extra resources.

Her fourth and last critical attribute of high-reliability organizations brought her to one of the

strands running through the conference: creating a psychologically safe culture built on mutual trust and respect. Research showed that suffering rudeness or incivility can damage task performance. “And it kick-starts a vicious cycle, people want to give back to other people.” But at the other end of the spectrum, respectful and trusting behavior could be “critical for speaking up and all of these other kinds of things, making sense of complex information. And I think it’s at the core of highly-reliable and safe performance.”

Trusting and learning cultures were necessary for the communication of changes in circumstances and risk levels up and down the organization that maintained ability to act quickly to restore safe operation. She warned against managers and executives reassuring themselves.

*“If something was going wrong, I would hear about it. But I’m not hearing about it, so it must not be going wrong.”* Maintaining curiosity was critical, she said. *“I think it’s important to remember that a good day today doesn’t mean a good day tomorrow.”*



# Jim Frederick: A Regulator's View

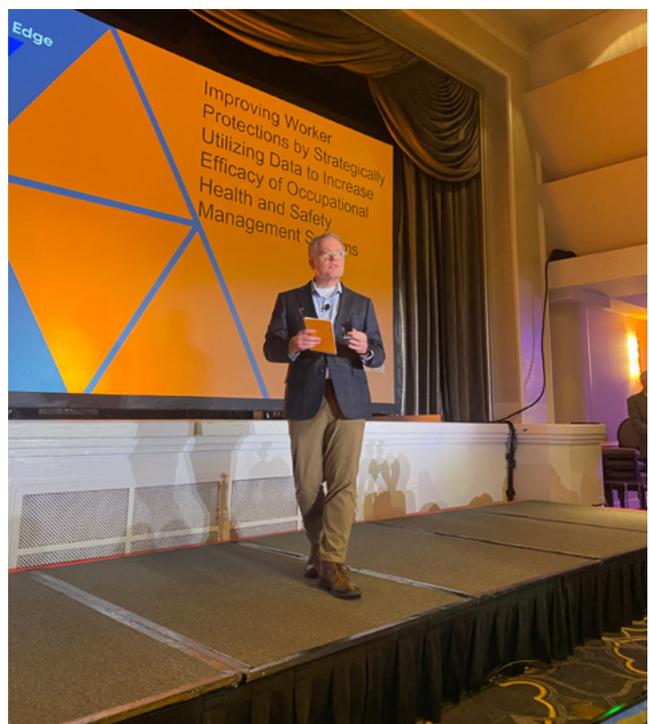
**Jim Frederick, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health, offered an overview of the agency he formerly supervised, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and how businesses could keep on the right side of it.**

Jim emphasized the importance of the number 14, representing the average daily fatalities in the US. To personalize the statistic, he highlighted for delegates the case of 27-year-old Jason Peters, who died in June 2020 due to heat exposure in Fresno, California after carrying out maintenance on a water tower.

Jim said that OSHA's message to organisations was that to prevent such fatalities and other injuries they needed to build robust health and safety management systems and mature them. Foreshadowing Lisa Brooks' presentation the following day, he said integrating human organizational performance (HOP) analysis into these systems was *"vital, because it's kind of the secret sauce to get the interaction with your workforce and understand the institutional knowledge and capacity"*.

He said evidence of a robust management system could change the perspective of an OSHA inspector towards an organization: *"It gives the inspector the opportunity to shift from just looking at enforcement and compliance to looking at the capacity you have in place."*

The core components of such a system could be found in the international ISO 45001 health and safety standard, the US ANSI/ASSP Z10 standard or OSHA's Recommended Practices for Safety and Health Programs (<https://tinyurl.com/4xzns3t4>).



Jim noted that while most safety professionals were taught early that they should be focusing on the top of the hierarchy of controls, with elimination or segregation of hazards, in too many businesses they were still focused mostly on the lower levels such as training and personal protective equipment. He said that some also focus on the wrong hazards whereas a study of the OSHA data on fatalities and serious injuries – plus a few outliers that were not gathered in occupational figures such as road injuries – would provide an easy list of the most important work hazards. He noted that OSHA provided filters to help people tailor the data to their own industrial sector and region of the US.



He concluded that he wanted to draw delegates' attention to these facilities so they could see "if it can help you focus your attention on some of those elements around your safety management system to really make sure you're getting the outcome that you want at your place, of reducing the risk of workers being injured or ill."

*HOP is kind of the secret sauce to get the interaction with your workforce and understand the institutional knowledge and capacity.*

**Jim Frederick**



# Andresa Hernandez: Future Fit

**Andresa Hernandez, Vice-President of Safety at multinational technology group Siemens, offered delegates a list of forces that were changing the way her organization addressed safety, from climate change, digital advances and growing stakeholder expectations. Balancing future demands and today's needs could be achieved, said Andrea, "if we put people at the center."**

Equipping people to adapt to change was the key to successfully navigating it, she said. Technology and the insights it could be used to deliver was a great safety enabler, she said, but only if the people using it were digitally literate; "And we've been investing in that". She had hired a data scientist to work in her safety team to give a different perspective. Not all safety leaders could have that luxury, she acknowledged, "but maybe you can find somebody to reach out to in your company". Examples of new technology the company was trialling included video-enabled glasses that allowed technicians to call on remote advice from more experienced colleagues.

In response to climate change, Siemens is enhancing its emergency preparedness for extreme weather events and training employees in dynamic risk assessment, so they could respond better to the unexpected. On training more generally she said the company had invested more than 442 million Euros in training its 300,000 workers in 2024, and had delivered 450,000 hours of health and safety training alone.

She said Siemens' investment in fulfilling the company's health and safety strategy and a flexible approach to how the strategic goals are achieved at country level was key to managing the corporate transformation. "And we need the transformation."



*The world is transforming. The business is transforming. The way that we work is transforming. Health and safety and wellbeing is transforming, but we keep the core, our people, at the center.*

*"The question I leave you with today is the following: focus in how you are supporting yourself, your team, in your organization, to navigate this challenge, think about how you can reflect this today and tomorrow. How can you prepare yourself?"*

*The world is transforming. The business is transforming. The way that we work is transforming. Health and safety and wellbeing is transforming, but we keep the core, our people, at the center.*

**Andresa Hernandez**

# A Celebration of Excellence

## Lifetime Achievement Awards

At the center of the conference was an evening – made possible by the event’s Diamond Sponsor dss+ – celebrating the best in safety theory and practice, combining lifetime achievement awards for individuals with performance excellence accolades for organizations.

### Lifetime Achievement Awards

The honors began with four Lifetime Achievement Awards, presented by UC Berkeley’s Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost, Benjamin E. Hermalin. Benjamin said: *“It’s my great privilege to stand before you today to recognize four remarkable individuals whose pioneering research has shaped the very foundation of safety, reliability and resilience in complex socio-technical systems ... Each of these honorees has advanced our understanding of how organizations, technology and human factors interact in ways that can either foster safety or lead to catastrophe.”*

The four honorees were:

**Diane Vaughan, Professor of Sociology and International and Public Affairs at Columbia University**, whose work provided important insights into the ways that unsafe practice in organisations can become normalized and how systemic factors contribute to disasters particularly in her study of the Challenger and Columbia space shuttle disasters.



**Karlene H Roberts, Professor Emeritus. Faculty Advisor, Young Entrepreneurs at Haas Management of Organizations, University of California, Berkeley**, who coined the term “high-reliability organizations” and studied organizations in high-hazard fields such as nuclear energy and oil and gas that maintain exceptional safety performance. Malcolm Staves said Professor Roberts had been a “transformative force in our understanding of organizational safety and reliability. Her groundbreaking research paved the way for what we now recognize as high reliability organization theories, providing profound insights into how organizations consistently achieve exceptional safety standards, even in complex, high-risk environments.”

**Professor David Woods, Professor Emeritus, Ohio State University**, whose work in safety began in 1979 in the aftermath of the Three Mile Island nuclear accident and had involved new insights into how people and organizations adapt to the complexities of high-risk operations, and how safety systems should be adapted. *"I think Professor Woods can be genuinely regarded as the father of resilience engineering,"* said Corrie.



David Woods

**James Reason, Professor of Psychology at the University of Manchester**, who changed perception of accident causation through his Swiss cheese model, illustrating how failures pass through gaps in layers of defense. Professor Reason was honored posthumously as he passed away in February 2025. His fellow award recipient David Woods paid tribute to James Reason, observing: *"Jim's career reminds us that safety is always controversial. Safety is always an uphill struggle, and many of the achievements we make we can backslide on."* He said that all his fellow award winners had persevered in the face of adversity, *"And so for all of us, we want to say to you, persevere. Because this matters."*

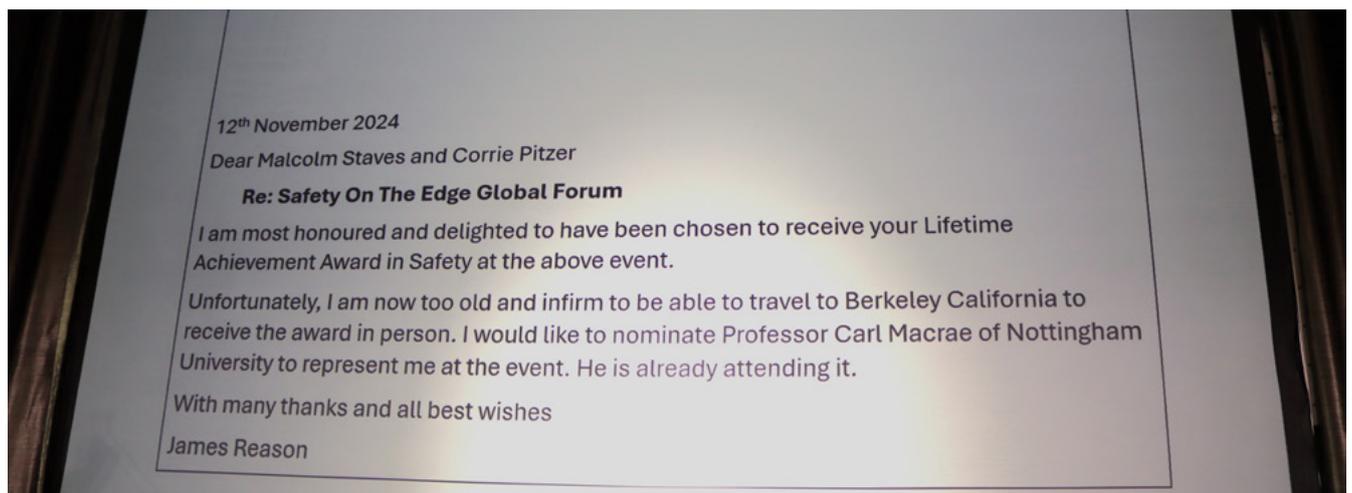
Corrie Pitzer announced that in memory of Professor Reason, a lifetime achievement award named the James Reason Award would be awarded at future SOTE Global Forums.



(On screen) James Reason

*Each of these honorees has advanced our understanding of how organizations, technology and human factors interact in ways that can either foster safety or lead to catastrophe.*

**Benjamin E Hermalin**





# Small Company/ Site Excellence Awards

The awards continued with the accolades for organizations. Corrie explained that the selection process had been made by an expert panel, which had filtered 30 original entrants down to 10, based on their leadership, management systems, human and organizational performance, information and analysis, management of risk and safety performance. Conference delegates had voted to select the award winners.

L'Oréal's, North Little Rock, Arkansas, manufacturing plant won the top Diamond Award in the category for smaller organisation or individual site. Accepting the award, Kay Mueller, Senior Safety Manager, outlined the plant's enactment of L'Oréal's safety credo of "risk assessment, excellence and beyond". This starts with the fundamentals of recognising and managing workplace hazards, then stepping up into excellence with safety culture and behavioural initiatives, then going beyond to make safety truly matter to employees with initiatives such as a home safety programme. Over 10 years the plant had seen its incident rates drop markedly, while near-miss reporting had grown as employees became more safety aware (For more detail on the North Little Rock plant's safety journey, see p23).



Kay Mueller



Ray Wijn

Netherlands-headquartered Ampelmann, provides access systems for personnel and cargo transfers to offshore vessels and installations, landed the runners-up Platinum award. Global HSE Manager Ray Wijn described the role of the company's Safety Ambassadors in all its workplaces who volunteered for extra training in risk assessment and incident investigation. He said their work was bolstered by training all employees in dynamic risk assessment and to welcome safety challenges from colleagues: "Every time someone intervenes, people are taught to say 'Thank you!'," he said.



L-R Chris Hutzler, Krista Chisholm, Carole Smets

### Large Company Excellence Awards

Energy provider Southern Company was honored with the Diamond award for embedding safety into every aspect of its operations, as exemplified by Kimberley Greene's presentation about Georgia Power earlier in the conference. Director Chris Hutzler collected the award, saying that the biggest impact of the company's changed attitude to safety had been apparent *"When our leadership stopped asking the questions, 'How does that impact our goal? Is that going to be recordable? ... And they started asking, 'Are they OK? What can we do for their family?'"* The change in attitude had had a strong positive effect on employee engagement, he said.

Pernod Ricard received the Platinum award for its safety transformation programme and "Be the One" initiative to create engagement and shift the company's mindset towards proactive safety. Group Health and Safety Director Carole Smets said the work to move from a reactive to a proactive culture included a strong emphasis on controlling SIF risks.





# Award Winner

## L'Oréal North Little Rock

**In a session on the Wednesday the EHS team members from L'Oréal's North Little Rock provided more detail on the journey to excellence that had won them the SOTE Diamond award and previously the UK Royal Society for Prevention of Accidents' (RoSPA) highest accolade, the Sir George Earle Trophy.**

Senior Environmental Manager Rachel Furman explained the site manufactures products including lip gloss and mascara as part of the world's biggest beauty products producer. She said the recent evolution in safety standards was part of a deliberate effort since 2017 by EHS staff to push the plant further along the maturity curve – L'Oréal uses an adapted version of the Dupont Bradley curve.

Senior Safety Manager Cora Stewart said there had been a concerted effort to deepen the site's safety culture. Visible leadership had been an important lever, she said, using the company's Measur program which tasks managers with having regular meaningful safety conversations on the shopfloor. *"What we noticed was we had this program in place, but typically when our management was going out to the floor, they were going out on first shift, talking to the same people in the same areas,"* Cora explained. *"So we changed our focus to make sure that we're targeting 100% of employees."*

In 2019, the site had revamped its EHS committee, ensuring it could feedback the views of every department and every shift. Entering the RoSPA awards had generated useful feedback that led to improvements in training provision. Risk assessment processes had been enhanced and contractor permits to work for hazardous tasks had been streamlined by moving from a paper-based system to an electronic one.



L-R Cora Stewart, Rachel Furman, Kay Mueller

Kay Mueller concluded that the Little Rock plant had moved along the cultural maturity curve to reach the Holy Grail of an "interdependent" safety culture, and that the keys to that evolution had been leadership commitment and a hunger in the EHS function and the workforce more generally for continual improvement. *"Our team and our people are continuously looking for improvement opportunities,"* said Kay. *"The continuous improvement part is key. And having that mindset that we're never going to stop, we're going to keep going, focus on people."*

*Typically when our management was going out to the floor, they were going out on first shift, talking to the same people in the same areas.*

**Cora Stewart**



# Kathy Seabrook: A Value Proposition

**“We are going to look at changing the math,” said Kathy Seabrook in one of the first sessions SOTE’s second day. She said that for too long businesses had not made provision for the non-financial value of things they depended on.**

One of the essential items that were never fully accounted for on company balance sheets was the people employed in the business and their health and productivity. But this human capital was essential to business resilience and sustainability.

Investors were interested in human capital management and other sustainability factors, she said, because they had recognized its knock-on effect on corporate results. That interest had translated into demand for metrics about material risks linked to sustainability, summarised as ESG data, giving them a picture of future viability through the management of risks and potential liabilities, from child labor in their supply chains to pollution incidents. This demand for information was first served through voluntary disclosure standards, and latterly, in some jurisdictions, through legislation, such as the European Union’s Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD). The CSRD applies to around 50,000 companies worldwide trading in Europe, including an estimated 4,500 companies headquartered in the US and Canada. The CSRD uses the concept of “double materiality”, requiring a company to report alongside its traditional annual report on the ESG factors that could impact their financial performance but also its own potential impact on people and environment. *“From an ESG perspective, if your company is reliant on water or any kind of natural resources, and it’s reliant on your people, that is the dependency piece,”* said Kathy, who recently co-authored a book on the subject of people sustainability with Tanis J Marquete,



*Connecting the Dots: Environment, Health, Safety, and Sustainability* (<https://tinyurl.com/yz2ytkzc>).

Health and safety is a fundamental element of nurturing human capital, said Kathy, since unhealthy or injured workers are no longer able to contribute to organisational performance. This meant that health and safety professionals no longer had to ask for a seat at the ESG table – “we are the table!” EHS managers were also well-placed because they were trained as risk managers and ESG measurement was about evaluating and mitigating risks to business.

Translating the non-financial value of the contribution to innovation and profit of healthy and well employees into a balance sheet item needed a change in mindset, Kathy argued. It meant assessing the value of what former Alcoa CEO Paul O’Neill called the “discretionary energy” happy, healthy workers expend to make a company thrive. *“So true north for me is about looking at this whole value of people,”* said Kathy, *“looking at the value of natural resources to a company and that they are valued and reflected.”*

For more information, she signposted delegates to a white paper she had co-authored with the Capitals Coalition in the UK, titled *Valuing Human Capital in Occupational Health & Safety* (<https://tinyurl.com/2zy2k322>) and also recommended the National Safety Council's *New Value of Safety* report (<https://tinyurl.com/a273sad4>) which describes a methodology for attaching financial value to health and safety management, which was used by sports apparel company Nike to estimate a \$6.65 million reputational payback from its supply chain safety initiatives.

This translation of previously intangibles into bottom-line sums made a real difference to accounting, said Kathy: *"It's about being able to talk the language of business, and not just using the words, but actually translating to profit and loss statements to balance sheets, to really help with that decision making."*

*True north for me is about looking at this whole value of people, looking at the value of natural resources to a company and that they are valued and reflected.*

**Kathy Seabrook**





# Lisa Brooks: Follow the Blue Line

**Managing the gap between work as desired by designers of safety systems and work as actually performed was explored by Lisa Brooks in a session on Human and Organizational Performance (HOP) theory.**

Lisa, who is Principle at Nexus HSE and formerly led multinational GE's HOP programme, looked at the relationship between so called "black line" working (as envisioned by organisations) and the reality of "blue line" operations on the ground. She said previous models had always shown the blue line diverging downwards from the black line, suggesting actual performance dropping off compared with the intended safe ways of working.

Her own preferred pattern showed the blue line criss-crossing the black one. *"I had to get away from thinking that this separation was something that was negative or bad and that really this blue line is going up and around and all over,"* she said. *"The reality was, workers had to create the blue line in order to get work done successfully."* The blue line was created by necessary adaptations: *"They're making adjustments, workarounds, problem solving, tweaking, fine tuning"*. Trade-offs between efficiency and keeping to rules, were inevitable.

Traditional health and safety management involved trying to make the blue line closer to the black one, she said. *"What I love about HOP is that it says, sometimes the blue line does need adjusting, but sometimes the black line needs adjusting."*

The presence of blue-line working made it important to build in understanding of risk and capacity to adapt. *"The blue line tells organisations that we have to have capacity in both their people and*

*their systems to build and so to constantly update their understanding of the risk and build additional controls and defenses as work goes along,"* she said. She quoted Todd Conklin about the importance of the "presence of capacity" to make safety.

Lisa reviewed the five principles commonly held to underpin the HOP philosophy, which include the normality of error, that workers have unique operational intelligence and that their actions and choices are driven by their context. She added a sixth principle: *"Improvement happens through learning"*. This learning included lessons from incidents and from success and from work as done – what she described as "blue line discovery". This could be achieved by leaders observing work tasks, she said; *"It improves operations because it provides critical knowledge to the leaders to help them be better and more effective at their jobs of supporting the workers."*

Openness between workers and managers in these discovery visits and an attitude of "humble enquiry" on the part of the leaders, helped create the psychological safety that so many of the conference's speakers had identified as the key to safety excellence. *"It's a win for the workers because they feel valued, they feel heard,"* Lisa concluded. *"It's a win for the leaders because they are now better equipped and have information to be more successful at their job, and that, in turn, makes it a win for the company."*

*The reality was, workers had to create the blue line in order to get work done successfully.*

**Lisa Brooks**

# Rodney Rocha: Speaking Upward

**Former NASA engineer Rodney Rocha used his session to reflect on the cultural factors at his former employer that contributed to the explosion of the space shuttle Columbia in February 2003, and the deaths of all seven of its crew.**

He reviewed the systems and codes that allowed the disaster to happen. Rodney recalled NASA premises were full of posters saying safety was the highest priority, but they were all missing the asterisk to a footnote that would have read *“Except when we tell you to stand down or I didn’t ask you to do that or that’s not your area, or we don’t have a task order for that, so you can’t charge your hours to that.”*

He said shortly before he retired, he had sent a 25-page report voicing concerns about a test flight to his management and to the flight crew. He said that when individuals found themselves needing to flag concern about the safety of a project, *“It’s vulnerable to be in that place if you’re alone.”* Returning to the conference’s theme of psychological safety, he said that management needed to recognize that most people were naturally confrontation-averse and would be reluctant to speak up, so must create environments where they felt able to. Psychological safety was so easily destroyed, he warned, as when he and some other engineers had been assigned to a group examining debris from the Columbia to decide if the wing had been at fault. *“They ignored our assessment,”* he recalled. *“They ignored our recommendation because they found a handful of experts who would say ‘it’s really OK’... And all of us on that debris assessment team, 37 of us that were NASA and contractors, lost our psychological safety. We never had another meeting.”*



For the individuals who needed to flag concerns, he said it was sometimes necessary to jump the normal reporting lines. He noted that the investigation into the Columbia crash had highlighted “stifling protocols” which restricted which managers engineers were allowed to approach.

Another problem was the “normalization of deviance” highlighted by SOTE lifetime achievement award recipient Diane Vaughan in her book on the Challenger disaster. He compared the habit to when a car starts making an unusual noise. The owner starts by worrying that it heralds a breakdown, then eventually thinks: *“You know what? I’ve been to work 28 times and my car didn’t break down, so I think it’s okay.”*

Another factor was impatience after a certain point: *"We have worked so hard; we can't put any more money into we just gotta try it."* Added to that was fear that lack of physical testing might cause the government to pull funding *"or Congress will get mad"*.

Outsourcing was another issue. *"I'm not saying it's wrong or bad,"* said Rodney, *"But it goes wrong when you lose transparency and you don't know what [external contractors] are doing."*

In answer to a question from the audience, Rodney said that one positive change in the culture had been caused by increased diversity. He said he had joined a culture of white male machismo, where the talk was mostly of football and beer. *"Today, it's refreshingly different,"* he said. *"Everybody is from different cultures. English is a second language for most of them; men, women, other orientations. And they're so civil ... they are so open and tolerant that it's wonderful."*

*They ignored our recommendation because they found a handful of experts who would say 'it's really OK'... And all of us lost our psychological safety. We never had another meeting.*

**Rodney Rocha**



Know  
yourself

# Kimberly Blanchard: Crossing Continents

**The issue of communication outside hierarchical channels raised by Rodney Rocha cropped up again in a session on managing cultural differences led by coach Kimberly Blanchard.**

Looking at the ways that different nationalities fall in a spectrum between egalitarian business cultures and hierarchical cultures, Kimberly used the examples that, in an egalitarian culture, *"It's OK to email or call people several levels above or below you"*, whereas in a hierarchical one communication was only expected between people in adjacent levels of seniority. This was one example of difference in behavior on the "leading scale", one of the dimensions in Erin Meyer's book *The Culture Map*.

Another was the "feedback scale" where different countries fall in the range between giving negative feedback directly – common in European business – and sugaring the pill, which is typical of the US. *"I had a French leader who moved to New York,"* said Kimberly, *"and she lost half of her management team in the first year, and she said they felt disengaged because she always challenged them in meetings ... she wanted to gather more perspectives, but they took it very personally."*

Cultural norms varied between countries in ways that were hard to imagine, she said, citing a Chinese practice of paying a doctor while you are healthy but withholding payment when you are sick because they have failed to keep you well.

She said that understanding the cultural norms of our home countries that have shaped us as individuals was necessary to manage people from other cultures well: *"What I hope for all leaders around the world, especially in the field of safety, is that we take a moment to know ourself a little better."*



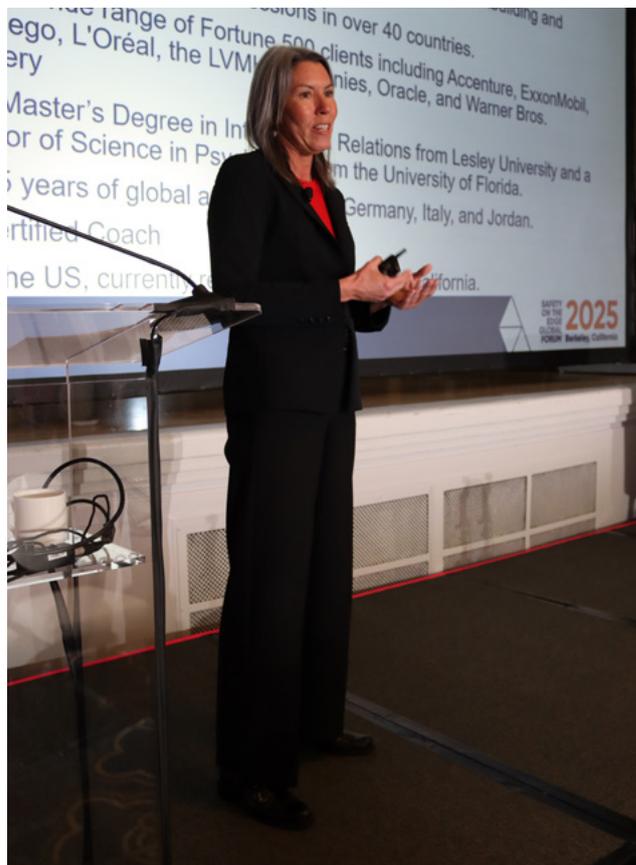
It was also important to understand the underlying cultural drivers of the countries whose nationals you employed, rather than falling back on rigid stereotypes: *"avoiding the idea that all Italians are like this: they're all late for meetings, and they all take three-hour lunches and drink wine."*

*"When we understand the deep, the deeper essence, the values of a culture, then we can start to understand why we think and behave differently,"* she explained. A true understanding of cultural differences allowed leaders to work with them. She told the story of a safety professional who travelled from the US to Jordan where he was in charge of improving safety culture at a manufacturing plant. *"What he learned very quickly was, in Islamic culture, there's something called God's will. It's a fatalistic culture. They say 'inshallah' ... Inshallah means if it's God's will."* The fatalism affected the use of seatbelts or donning protective equipment. The American manager did not try to override the ingrained habit. *"He understood the value of the Islamic values of care and family and God. And so he started to say: God wills you to get home safely today; God wants you to wear your safety goggles."*

She left the audience with some suggestions for safety leaders working across national boundaries. These included asking good questions, such as “*how do decisions get made in your location?*” Another recommendation was to ask for feedback on their management style. “*It’s always eye-opening to see what people say about you,*” she noted. It was a good idea to develop working agreements jointly with local colleagues setting out working methods explicitly. Finally, she recommended talking to colleagues about your own management style. “*When you know yourself, you can say to others ‘I’m very direct’, or ‘I tend to sandwich feedback’. Talk a little bit about these differences. Check on your impact. Use the vocabulary of these differences. I think it creates safety to talk about these kinds of differences.*”

*What I hope for all leaders around the world, especially in the field of safety, is that we take a moment to know ourself a little better.*

**Kimberly Blanchard**



# In Conversation: Dr Tom Krause

**Insights from a long career researching safety were offered by organisational culture guru Dr Tom Krause, founder of the Krause Bell consultancy, in a fireside-style discussion with SOTE founder Malcolm Staves.**

Malcolm kicked off by asking how Tom became interested in safety. Tom said he had trained in clinical and experimental psychology and through his clinical work had become involved with an engineering company in 1979. *“The subject of safety came up, and they said, ‘Well, we understand the technical part, the engineering part, but we don’t understand the behavioral part’”* Tom recalled.

He accepted a job offer with the company and began to develop a behavior-based safety (BBS) programme, which cut the incident rate by more than 40% in the first year, and that began his journey out of clinical practice and into safety consultancy.

In response to a question from Malcolm about behavior in a safety context. Tom replied that he regretted the way BBS had been used to pin responsibility for incidents on individuals, *“Because BBS, done the way it was designed, does not blame the employee”*. The original BBS system had four steps, he said: *“define the behavior, observe the frequency, give feedback to people, and then look at the data that you gathered when you observed and find solutions that enable the behavior”*. The system had been distorted in use to focus on individual failings, he said.

He said the key to effective BBS initiatives, based on his research into more than 80 companies, was the quality of leadership. Engaged leaders made the difference between failure and success and it was easy to tell whether a leader was engaged from the



way they conducted site safety tours, whether they were genuinely interested in worker perspectives. He said key to assessing the leaders was 360-degree assessment. *“You ask the people around them, and they’ll tell you who is a strong safety leader, who isn’t, who listens well, who takes action.”*

Malcolm said it was sad that the same issue of leaders’ disengagement persisted. *“Why don’t managers get it?”* he asked. *“Why do we all have challenges with the CEOs?”* Tom said it was human nature for many senior people to focus on other things until they had personal experience of a fatality or serious accident on their watch. Malcolm asked how leaders could be influenced to engage better. *“I think the strongest step you can take is to get them out there, talking to people who are close to the work,”* Tom advised. *“With you standing next to them and coaching them on the spot.”*

Malcolm moved on to Tom’s role in alerting organisations to the fact that SIF rates would not necessarily respond to standard accident reduction initiatives, which Malcolm said had been “a revelation” when he first read about it in 2010.

Tom said he had received a call from a client who had found SIFs remaining stubbornly high as other incidents declined. Studying the data, he realized that Herbert Heinrich and Frank Bird's safety triangle or pyramid models, that state a fixed ratio between many smaller incidents at the bottom and a few SIFs at the top, needed qualifying. Expanding the data set to six companies, he registered that not all small incidents were equally important, since some had the potential for more severe harm. *"But that really changes the game,"* said Tom. *"It means that the way you approach serious injuries and fatalities needs to be quite different. And the old way of saying 'let's get everything at the bottom' is not optimal."*

In trying to tackle SIFs, he said there is a lot to learn from examining the decision making of managers before the event and unpicking the cognitive biases that might have led someone designing equipment or creating procedures to underestimate the probability of something going wrong. *"You get that from decision analysis, and in my experience, that's the most effective way to convert the senior leader who thinks this is all about [operator] behavior,"* said Tom, bringing the discussion back to where it had started, with the potential for misattributing responsibility in BBS initiatives.

Malcolm rounded off the discussion by asking about Tom's embodying - in his latest book, *If Your Culture Could Talk* - organisational culture as a character that can give its views to senior executives. *"The big advantage that occurred to me is that the personified culture can talk to the leader in a way that you and I can't,"* said Tom. "The culture creature can say, 'no, wait a minute, you're off base!'"

Asked by a delegate how safety professionals could personify their own organisations' safety cultures, Tom advised researching the cultural infrastructure, the routes by which information and influence flow. He said culture was shaped by importance of "perceived organisational support", the degree to which anyone experiencing difficulty feels they can approach their superiors for advice and support. The last organisational factor he advised assessing was the level group intelligence, or collective intelligence: *"That's another big cultural barrier."* The session ended with Malcolm thanking Tom for his insights.

*The way you approach serious injuries and fatalities needs to be quite different. And the old way of saying 'let's get everything at the bottom' is not optimal.*

**Tom Krause**



# Laurie Shelby: Keeping it Real

**Laurie Shelby, Vice President of Environment, Health, and Safety at Tesla, outlined some of the components of the company's approach to health and safety management, which added up to "real safety", as opposed to "fake safety," which led an organisation to false confidence when they were measuring and managing the wrong things.**

Laurie reminded delegates that Tesla is not just a car and truck maker, but is involved in energy generation, battery storage, solar roofs, autonomous driving, and robotics. She added that the corporation had its own construction division with 3000 workers - out of a total workforce of 130,000 - who build and maintain its factories and production lines.

She supported Todd Conklin's argument that true safety is not measured by the absence of accidents but the present of capacity. She noted that it was hard sometimes to wean non-safety leaders off a fixation with accident rates, but carefully defining what capacity meant helped. The components of capacity, she said were, active, visible, compassionate leaders, engaged workers able to navigate and adapt to a changing workplace and the presence of safeguards, and the systems and equipment that help prevent bad events or mitigate the outcomes.

She said that Tesla relied on human and organizational performance (HOP) principles including the normality of human error, that blame gets in the way of improvement and that context drives behaviour. She has added an extra principle, that safeguards, or controls, save lives.

Picking up the earlier theme of SIF prevention, Laurie said Tesla's Life programme was designed to head off the most serious incidents, but embraced not just occupational safety but also environmental damage and loss of reputation. The company focused on near



misses and incidents with serious potential and after each, she said, "We ask these three questions: what safeguards existed and worked? What safeguards existed and didn't work, and what safeguards did not exist at all but could have?"

She moved on to safety metrics, arguing that lagging incident rates such as the total recordable incident rate (TRIR) and lost time injury rate (LTIR) were false friends in measuring success. She said they had to be recorded but should not be shared externally and no targets should be set for them. She recommended delegates read a 2020 report by the Construction Safety Research Alliance titled *The Statistical Invalidity of TRIR as a Measure of Safety Performance* (<https://tinyurl.com/2758ujcm>).

She said another key measure of "real safety" was employee feedback. Tesla runs an employee suggestion and hazard-spotting scheme titled Take Charge. "I think we have over two million Take Charges now," said Laurie, "and at first I remember Elon [Musk, Tesla's co-founder and CEO] saying 'Oh my gosh, we've got all these problems!' I said 'no, employees are finding these things before something happens, it's a great thing and it should go up.'" As the volume of Take Charge notifications goes up, the accident rate goes down at any site, she said.

# David Daniels: How Does it Feel?

**“The question is, do the safety things you do cause people to feel safe?” Dr David Daniels asked delegates in the last presentation session of the conference.**

David served 30 years in the fire and rescue services and now chairs the National Association of Black Compliance and Risk Management Professionals Safety and Security Workgroup. He cited business consultant Myron Golden, who said that people do things only because they feel like it. “So your safety program is effective or not because people feel it or not,” said David. He noted that most safety systems had been developed by men and that males were prone to prioritising values over feelings, which they might perceive as a sign of weakness. “I’m here to make the argument that we should pay more attention to how things feel,” he argued, “and if we did that more often, they would actually be safer.” He said there was room for more subjective measures of safety alongside the quantitative data required by executives.

He suggested employers should try to account for moral injuries as well as physical ones, giving the example where employees are expected to continue to work with people who have been disciplined for bullying them. Another was taking a job in a company and finding out it was involved in unethical practices. “But you’re the vice president, or you’re the supervisor, you’re the person who has to do it, and it just doesn’t feel right. But I kind of do it anyway, because I want to keep my job.”

Such psychological injuries could develop into diagnosable mental health conditions, David warned. “Don’t forget, the people that you hire don’t come as a blank slate,” he said, adding that employers were often happy to make adjustments for new hires with physical injuries “but some people come with an emotional limp ...The question is whether or not our



safety related systems will acknowledge that it’s an issue,” he added.

Encouraging workers to talk about potentially traumatic incidents that happened at work, such as witnessing injuries, was one way to promote psychological health, he said.

Emphasising the importance of visible leadership commitment to psychological health and safety brought the session round to where the conference had begun, citing the obvious engagement of Georgia Power CEO Kimberley Greene: “I was absolutely impressed by the conclusion of her presentation. When she looked like she’s a human being, and was actually feeling emotional about other people.”

Worker participation was vital for good psychological health but also good safety systems, he said. Doing safety “to people” or “for people” had far less value than doing it “with people”, respecting their contributions. The key was respect for everyone in the organisation, he said, concluding on one of the major themes of Safety on The Edge: psychological safety. “[It’s about] simply seeing each other as human beings and realizing we’re just human beings and not good or bad human beings, not right or wrong,” said David.

# Closing Out

**In the conference's wrap-up session, Corrie Pitzer said the sessions had "exceeded all our expectations" and evidence of its success was that most of the hall's seats were occupied at the end of the second day. He said the organisers' aim had been to "give back to safety" through a not-for-profit model and that the extraordinary roster of thought leaders who had accepted the invitation to present had responded to that by waiving their speakers' fees had vindicated that decision.**

*"We want to create partnerships between people attending the conference and also between academia and practitioners, partnerships between executives and safety professionals,"* said Corrie, explaining that at the 2026 event safety professionals would be each offered a complimentary place for a non-safety executive from their organisation.

He said the event had fulfilled its promise to present safety on the edge, with speakers discussing cutting-edge technologies and best-in-class practices. Corrie thanked the event staff, the sponsors and his co-founder Malcolm Staves for his "endless energy" in directing the project. Malcolm joined him in acknowledging the role of the sponsors: dss+, ASSP, Intalex, Krause Bell Group, NEBOSH, NSC, Protex AI, RoSPA, Shirley Parsons, Veriforce and Voxxel. He also thanked Kathy Seabrook for her support.

Malcolm asked delegates for their impressions of the event. James Pomeroy Global HSEQ Leader of engineering multinational Arup, said that the organisers had "hit the sweet spot" between health and safety practice and academic research. He said there were sessions presenting new and disruptive ideas that fulfilled the heading of safety on the edge.



Kathy Seabrook said that Kimberley Greene had set the standard at the start for a "phenomenal" collection of speakers and that the networking time had provided opportunities for meaningful discussions with peers.

*"As a young EHS professional, attending this conference and meeting these people has given me, for the first time in my career, a clear path forward to becoming part of the next generation of leaders."*

Another thanked them for providing the right combination of space speakers and topics, "so that we can take those learning moments and all this knowledge back to our teams and hopefully do great things."

Malcolm and Corrie concluded proceedings by thanking delegates and wishing them safe journeys.

*Attending this conference and meeting these people has given me, for the first time in my career, a clear path forward to becoming part of the next generation of leaders.*

**SOTE delegate**

## Safety On The Edge



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