



FACING FORWARD:
PROFILES OF
EHS
PROFESSIONALS



Environment, Health, and Safety (EHS) is often viewed by some workers and executives as nothing more than a box to be ticked off on an onboarding training checklist. The truth, as we all know, is far different.

We at the *EHS Daily Advisor* know how passionate EHS professionals are about their work: ensuring that everyone at a jobsite or facility gets home safely every day. However, because they often work behind the scenes, most people in an organization don't know or understand what the many roles they play.

We're taking a look at some of the faces that make up the talented pool of EHS professionals. Using snippets from the *EHS Daily Advisor* series "Faces of EHS," this special report profiles what makes EHS so special: the people in the role.

MEETING TODAY'S EHS CHALLENGES AND SHAPING THE FUTURE

Organizations of all sizes face challenges to the health and safety of their workforce, and those obstacles vary not only from company to company, but often across job sites, and between departments in the same facility. It is incumbent on EHS professionals to find creative solutions to meet their organization's immediate challenges while helping leaders institute effective changes that pave the way for a safer, healthier, and more productive workforce in the future.

KAHLILAH L. GUYAH, CHMM, CSP

CEO, Founder and Principal Consultant at EHS Compliance Services Inc.

Guyah reflects on strategies for tackling problems on multiple projects, and the role that sustainability will play in the future of EHS.

I enjoy learning about the products and technologies my clients are creating. This is particularly exciting because much of my work doesn't change but must be adapted to fit the culture of each organization and to address the EHS areas that specifically apply.

Helping organizations identify the "why" in their journey to EHS excellence is one of the most difficult portions of the work I do. Many organizations are afraid of fines and other regulatory penalties. But the organizations that excel in EHS performance and management system implementation are doing so because they've identified core values that align with their desire to keep workers healthy and safe and minimally impact the environment around them. Working with organizations to find that is one of the most difficult yet rewarding parts of what I do. I appreciate that the definition of sustainability is expanding and now becoming inclusive of not just environmental footprint but also the health and safety of the people with whom an organization

works—whether employees, contractors, or visitors. Investors and industry alike are beginning to understand that sustainable organizations are those that eliminate and mitigate risks, including those that result in injuries and illnesses to their workers.





PATRICK KAROL, CSP, SMS, CIT

FOUNDER OF KAROL SAFETY CONSULTING

Karol finds great satisfaction in his safety work, and in the community of safety workers.

I love the fact that I am impacting the lives of frontline workers—first, knowing that more employees are going home safe as a result of my actions; second, having the opportunity to coach junior safety professionals and operations supervisors; and third, the community of safety professionals is one of caring and sharing.

There are several emerging trends that come to mind. Opioid and marijuana use is growing and poses a difficult challenge. Technology is advancing at a breathtaking pace. How to leverage that technology for safety's benefit and how it impacts employee safety are virtually a daily job. One example is the safety implications

and benefits related to the growing use of drones. Interest in total employee health and well-being is growing. Security issues are beginning to fall under the purview of safety.



LINDSAY K. BELL, MPH, CSP

REGIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGER, SOLVAY NOVECAR

Bell reflects on her path to an EHS career and the value of mentoring.

Before working in safety, I worked in the field of public health research focusing on spatial epidemiology and medical geography. Through that work, I developed transferable skills in data visualization and evaluation, training and communication, and public speaking.

I entered the EHS profession through graduate studies in public health. Initially studying environmental health, I changed my focus to health, safety, and environment after completing co-op assignments in EHS training and manufacturing operations. After graduation, I continued to work in manufacturing in a rotational development program for early-career professionals designed to provide diverse experiences in safety, supply chain, and lean

manufacturing. The program empowered me to connect the dots between EHS and operations in the manufacturing environment.

Find a mentor! Mentorship is one of the best ways for new safety professionals to develop their skill set and solve complex problems quickly. Often, the solution to the issues they may face will be similar to those that came before them; it's far more valuable to innovate than to reinvent.

EARL BLAIR

VISITING LECTURER OF SAFETY MANAGEMENT AT INDIANA UNIVERSITY, BLOOMINGTON.

Blair opens up about learning from preventable incidents and meeting the challenges that lay ahead.

The single low point in my safety career was a fatality that occurred at the first site where I worked as a safety professional. It was a preventable incident that occurred to a 32-year-old maintenance worker, husband, and father of three children.

This event was traumatic to me, and it transformed my understanding of the importance of safety from something I knew in my head into a strong feeling in my heart. I resolved then to dedicate myself to doing the best I can to prevent serious injuries and fatalities.

EHS offers a variety of terrific career opportunities. There is certainly a great variety of experiences among individuals in

the EHS field because these positions exist in every industry, and organizations take different approaches to EHS. The field will become more complex and challenging in the future as new technologies such as nanotechnology, drones, and 3D printing, among others, are developed as tools for EHS professionals. Therefore, safety professionals will need to be highly educated in a broad array of fields in order to effectively advise and add value to their organizations.



CHIP DARIUS, OHST, CIT, CSHO, CUSP

FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT OF SAFETY PRIORITY CONSULTANTS, LLC

Darius discusses the joys of safety training and an EHS career.

One candle lights another and loses nothing in the process. I like how I can teach a class full of safety professionals, who go back and teach their safety committee members, who each go out and detect and report hazards, and all of them take the safety message home to their families and friends. The ripple effect of raising safety awareness keeps on going.

I like how every day brings different challenges, from regulatory changes to job site assessments to incident analysis. Safety work is diverse and it's important to keep up on many different topics. Business is a series of challenges and solutions. Get into the mix and get your hands and boots dirty. Learn at least

as much from the front-lines workers as from textbooks, conferences and professionals. Never stop learning. It's all about protecting valuable business assets and improving business value, and protecting life is the highest calling.





PAM WALASKI, CSP

**SENIOR PROGRAM DIRECTOR, SPECIALTY
TECHNICAL CONSULTANTS, INC.**

Walaski outlines some of the biggest challenges she’s helped clients face, and touches on the importance of networking within the EHS professional community.

For our clients, the biggest challenge is navigating the various regulatory requirements in a way that allows them to maintain effective, efficient, and productive operations. Our role in assisting with this process is to conduct a gap analysis to identify areas of risk and opportunity, then help develop a plan for closing the gaps.

We find our clients are best able to accomplish this process when they focus on a management system process rather than one-off compliance in a specific area, and our work with them typically focuses on continual improvement.

Try not to miss opportunities to network—virtually, in person, within your organization, and outside of it. The members of your profession’s networking

group may change over time, but they will be your support team, your cheerleaders, and your go-to problem-solvers who will enhance your career and challenge you to grow.



JUDY AGNEW, PHD

**SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF SAFETY SOLUTIONS,
AUBREY DANIELS INTERNATIONAL**

Agnew looks to coming trends in EHS and harnessing the power of behavioral science to create safer workspaces.

One of the more exciting trends is the use of technology to improve safety. Not only can robots and other machines complete the most dangerous jobs (thereby taking humans out of harm’s way), but technology can also ensure that when humans do the work, they do it safely.

Sensors and cameras can give workers moment-by-moment feedback that enables them to adjust their behavior. Such feedback has the potential to significantly improve safe behavior, but it has to be used carefully. Unfortunately, the natural tendency is to use technology to focus on exceptions—instances of at-risk behavior. This then leads to the use of more frequent negative feedback and discipline to manage the behaviors, which ultimately undermines engagement and culture. To make such technology effective, it should be used to positively reinforce safe behaviors and improvements in those behaviors, in addition to constructive feedback when appropriate. Deliberate use of positive consequences can turn what might initially feel like “Big Brother” into a welcome tool like Fitbits and Apple® Watches that monitor personal health behaviors.

Learn about and understand the powerful impact of behavioral science. I do not mean BBS; I mean the science. Why? Because everything we do in business and safety is done through people’s behavior. The more you understand behavior, the

more effective you will be. You will design better safety tools and processes, you will write better procedures, and you will create better safety strategies. Perhaps most importantly, you will improve your ability to influence others. Safety management is largely about influence. Safety professionals rarely have a position of power. They have to persuade people to do the right things. For example, they have to persuade leaders to alter organizational systems to better support safety, they have to persuade supervisors to spend the time to listen well and have effective safety interactions, and they have to persuade frontline workers to report near misses. Behavioral science will help you be effective and will enable you to more positively influence others—ultimately creating a safer workplace.

HOW EHS PROFESSIONALS ARE FACING THE PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 Pandemic has had a dramatic impact on business, and no one understands this better than EHS professionals. They have had to help their organizations rapidly adapt to a new safety reality, not only ensuring the safety of essential on-site and remote workers, but by playing an increased role in business continuity.



DOMINIC COOPER, PHD, CFIOSH, CPSYCHOL

FOUNDER OF B-SAFE MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

Cooper provides key insights EHS professionals can bring to their leadership team to help mitigate the impacts of the pandemic on the organization.

From a psychological safety standpoint, listen to your employees' concerns, and where feasible and reasonable, act on what they said. It might prove beneficial to have a suggestion book or box available for people to record any ideas, with this being checked by EHS folks every couple of hours or so. Similarly, provide feedback to all employees every single day using multiple communication channels to keep people informed about the company's responses to the crisis, suggestions that have been enacted, etc. Highlight the positives where possible to boost morale.

Similarly, the company should provide advice on how to overcome stress or loneliness; how to set up a safe workstation; and how to avoid feeling abandoned, isolated, and anxious (people are concerned about their loved ones, their finances, and their company's survival). Now is the time for companies to step up and show they really do care for their employees. Flip this terrible situation, and create an unbreakable emotional bond with your people. It will pay you back tenfold once the crisis is over.



ROBERTA SMITH, MSPH, RN, CIH, COHN-S, CIC

DIRECTOR OF WORKER HEALTH, CORITY AXION HEALTH

Smith shares her thoughts on managing information overload, the importance of staying ahead of the (misinformation) curve, and her hopes for the future of EHS.

The best strategy is looking for the correct information and having reliable resources. Beyond doing our daily tasks, I think it is critical that people in the profession continue to look at scientific studies with critical eyes and that we start to understand what to do with the vast amounts of data that we have collected over the years.

With the COVID-19 experience, information has been coming at us from many directions, and I don't think everyone is sitting down and looking at the information completely—looking at the source, how the study was done, and how that information could help or hinder EHS activities.

Just because someone is doing one thing does not make it a best practice. The CDC, OSHA, and WHO have done a great job getting resources out there quickly. Social media has both helped and hindered our jobs. Employees might see a "study" on social media (read: just saw the headline and a graph) and then insist that their company do something to protect them. If you have valid information to the contrary of their social media post, those can always be challenging conversations.

I hope that people continue to enter this profession, especially women. We all know that EHS professionals tend to be behind-the-scenes professions and sometimes don't get the recognition they deserve. Also, learn all that you can. Even the most mundane tasks (e.g., swabbing prairie dog holes for fleas) might either result in a new career path or make for a great story at your next happy hour.

The background of the entire page is a faded, blue-tinted photograph of an industrial facility, likely a power plant or refinery. It features several tall smokestacks, complex piping, and structural frameworks. In the distance, a range of mountains is visible under a hazy sky. The overall aesthetic is professional and industrial.

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100 Winners Circle, Suite 300

Brentwood, TN 37027

Phone: 800-727-5257