

# SAFETY IS BELIEF IN ACTION

BY RUSSELL F. KLINEGARDNER

After almost 30 years in industry, I've noticed one truth has never changed: the work we do matters, but how we do it matters even more.

Safety isn't just a metric or a meeting topic, it's a mindset. It's shaped by the choices we make, the standards we uphold, and the belief we share that protecting people is the most important part of the job.

The belief that safety is a shared responsibility and essential to protecting and preserving lives is what brings us together for the Safety Excellence Awards each year. These recognitions serve a larger purpose, they remind us that leadership is not only about outcomes, but also accountability. The way we work and how safely we do it is a visible, daily demonstration of our values in motion.

## BUILT ON TRUST, BACKED BY TRAINING

There was a time when safety mostly meant compliance: follow the rules, pass the inspection, check the box. It was critical, but it was procedural. I believe the companies leading in safety today understand that real results come from something deeper. They come from a culture where safety isn't an afterthought, it's an essential part of the process.

At HASC, we've had a front-row seat to that transformation. We've watched organizations move beyond minimum requirements to build environments where safety is expected, reinforced, and owned at every level.

This kind of safety culture doesn't happen by chance, it's built through trust, training, and a belief that every worker has both the right and the responsibility to stop unsafe work. It's driven by leaders who listen, and by a workforce that feels confident speaking up and taking action because they know they'll be supported.

## CONNECTING THE DOTS ACROSS INDUSTRY

The Health and Safety Council exists to support this kind of transformation, not just within individual companies, but across the entire petrochemical, refining, and energy sectors. Progress in safety takes shared knowledge, open dialogue, and a universal commitment to raising the standard together.

Programs like Safety Essentials and Safety Days reflect what's possible when companies align around a common goal. These efforts are not top-down; they are shaped by employees doing the work and refined through real-world experience.

At HASC, our role is to keep that momentum going. We do more than deliver training—we collaborate with industry leaders, many of whom are here tonight, to reinforce a powerful truth: safety isn't just protocols and procedures. It's a mindset, a standard, and a shared responsibility we bring to every job. When we move forward together, we create safer outcomes for all.

## BELIEF BEYOND BOUNDARIES

In a time when differences in generation, background, or political perspective may divide us, safety continues to unite us. It doesn't matter what company name is on your hard hat or what title you hold—we're all grounded in the same belief: every person deserves to go home safe.

That belief isn't just something we say; it guides how we lead, how we work, and how we support one another. It's the thread that connects every person that walks across the stage, sits in this room, and contributes across our industry.

## HOLDING THE LINE ON PROGRESS

We've made meaningful progress, but a strong safety culture is never truly complete. It's not a milestone we pass or a metric we hit. Instead, it's a commitment we renew each day through the conversations we engage in, the decisions we make, and the standards we uphold.

Every step forward reminds us to keep building on what works. Each audit, near miss, and piece of feedback is an opportunity to strengthen what we value and stay focused on what matters. Let this evening be a reminder that safety isn't static; it's something we shape together.

On behalf of HASC, thank you to every leader, team member, and organization represented at the Safety Excellence Awards tonight. Your commitment, your standards, and—above all—your belief in the value of safety shapes our industry for the better.



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When that belief drives our actions, it strengthens the culture we're relentlessly building and ensures we continue moving forward—together.

