

WISCONSIN

# SAFETY VOICE

Winter 2018 Issue 3



## The Deadliest Chemical in Wisconsin Workplaces

### ALSO INSIDE:

- *Stopping the Opioid Epidemic*
- *Avoiding Deadly Workplace Mistakes*
- *WSC Conference Preview*



# WSC

## WISCONSIN

In This Issue...

# SAFETY VOICE

Winter 2018 Issue 3

## 2018 Keynote Speakers

Lori Schneider is an engaging presenter who speaks on a variety of topics, including leadership, safety and human resources, among others. After being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, Lori challenged herself to summit the tallest mountain on each of the seven continents, including Mt. Everest—which she completed in 2009. Her remarks show that ordinary people can and do achieve extraordinary things—safety, of course.

Captain Keith Selburn is known to millions of television viewers as captain of the Wizard on the hit show, *Deadliest Catch*. Safety being Keith's number one priority, he is involved in many organizations that make it their mission to promote safety at sea. Keith's intellect, wit and charisma make him an engaging speaker who will translate being safe at sea into being safe in every aspect of life.



## The Deadliest Chemical in Wisconsin Workplaces

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# 2018

## Wisconsin Safety & Health Conference and Exposition

April 16-18, 2018  
Kalahari Resort & Convention Center  
Wisconsin Dells, WI



# Safety is a Choice

By Janet Metzger  
WSC Executive Director

We make choices every single day. What outfit should I wear today? What creamer should I put in my coffee? Should I wear my seat-belt on my way to work? Should I answer that text while I am driving?

While some of these seem like minute things that we don't really think about, the choices we make could cause injury—or even worse—end our life.

Safety is a choice. At Wisconsin Safety Council (WSC), we choose safety, and we hope you do, too. Nothing can be more important than safety. No text or phone call while you are driving is as important as your own life. Cutting corners at work so you can finish a project a couple minutes early is not worth a severe injury.

That is why all of us must strive to have a culture of safety in our offices, on the factory floor and in our daily lives. When we put safety first, good things will follow. Safe companies not only have the peace of mind that their workers are going home safe each and every night, their bottom lines improve, as well.

I joined WSC this fall, and it has been an amazing few months. Our members have proved to me that safety is a priority. Whether it is our Commitment to Safety partners that work with us



year round, or the small manufacturer in northwest Wisconsin who wanted to teach CPR to their workers, we are proud to serve as your one-stop-shop for safety training and products.

I have only been on the job for a couple months, but I am energized for the future. We have a lot of new programs, trainings and products that can help your company create a culture of safety, and I cannot wait to work with each and every one of you.

So, when you wake up in the morning, please choose safety. Trust me, it will definitely pay off. And if WSC can help you do that, I am just a phone call or email away. ■

Call Janet at 608.258.3400 or email her at [jmetzger@wisafetycouncil.org](mailto:jmetzger@wisafetycouncil.org).

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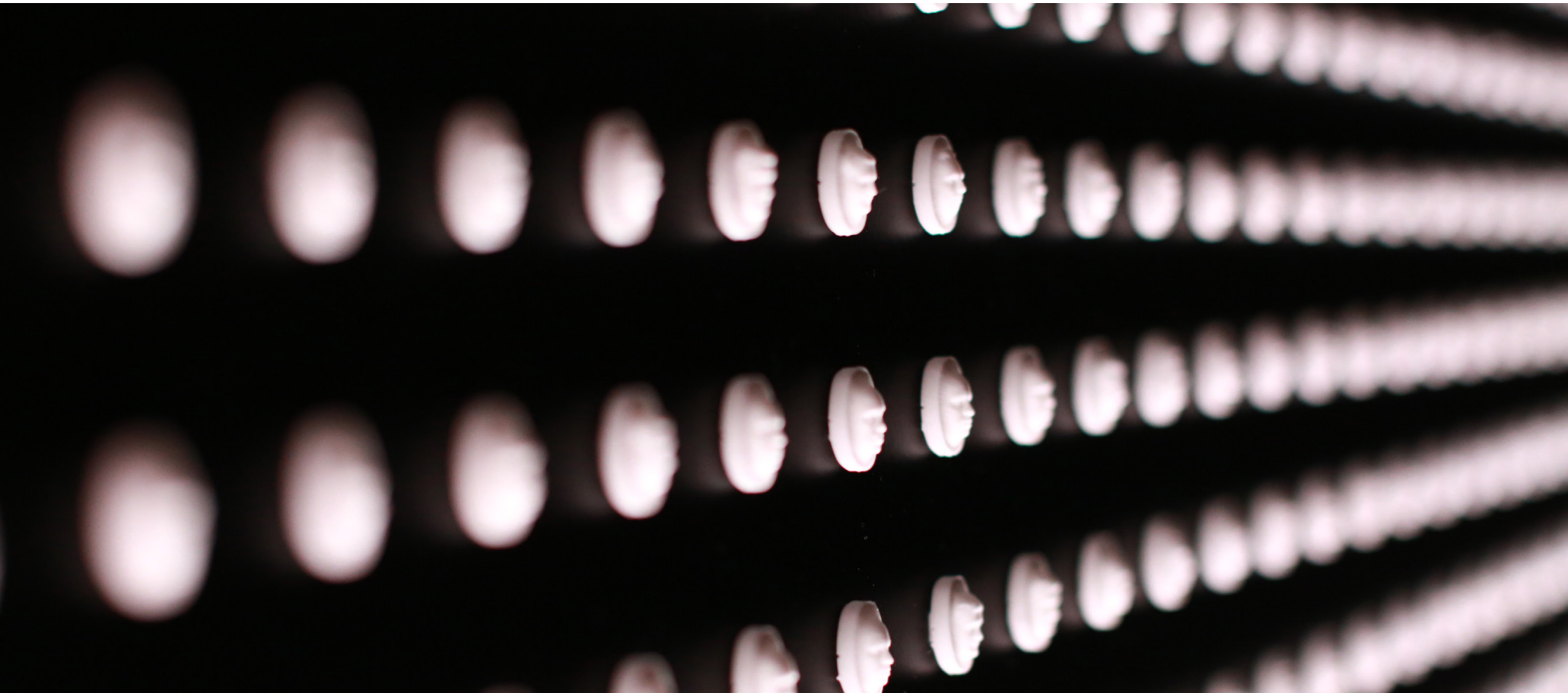
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# Joining Together to Stop Everyday Killers

By *Debbie Hersman*  
*National Safety Council President & CEO*

It's impossible to turn on the news without hearing opioids mentioned at least once every single day. Twenty-two thousand people lost their lives to opioids in 2015 alone, and the death toll continues to rise. At the National Safety Council, we are doing something about it. Working with our members, elected offi-

cials and advocates, we are bringing attention to this issue in a big way through a multi-faceted campaign—Stop Everyday Killers. Most people don't spend their time worrying about the things they do every day—like reading a text while behind the wheel, or taking a prescription medication. But drug

overdoses now eclipse car crashes as the number one cause of preventable death. We have to get people to start paying attention and the National Safety Council is committed to raising awareness of the everyday killers in our midst. Alcohol and drug-free workplace policies have been around for

many years. However, prescription drug misuse has grown rapidly, and employers have struggled to keep pace. More than 75 percent of those who struggle with substance use disorders are in the American workforce, meaning the issue has created a potential safety hazard for employers. Our nationwide surveys have told us that more than 70 percent of employers have felt the impact of prescription drug use. The results of the opioid impact on the American workforce have been dire. In some communities, factories can't find qualified workers. One in 10 employers have workers who have been arrested or overdosed due to prescription drugs. The misuse or abuse of prescription

medication can affect productivity or contribute to errors and make workplaces more dangerous to the people working there. Taking proactive, proven measures not only saves lives and helps prevent injuries, but also helps you keep costs down and morale higher. Employers can make a big difference. Research clearly shows that people are likely to stick with treatment and successfully get back to work when that treatment is initiated and supported by an employer. In fact, employers have a bigger impact on successfully getting people into treatment than even friends and family. So employers shouldn't overlook their role in this fight.

**Our nationwide surveys have told us that more than 70 percent of employers have felt the impact of prescription drug use.**

A recent National Safety Council survey of both opioid users and non-users has shed light on the lack of awareness around the inherent risks and hidden hazards that contribute to our ongoing epidemic. We've found that Americans still don't understand the risks associated with opioid prescriptions, and are largely unaware of the impact of opioids, including that it is illegal to share or distribute controlled substances to friends and family. Through the Stop Everyday Killers campaign, we are encouraging everyone to take two easy steps

towards helping us curb opioids in our midst. First, it's crucial to get unused medication out of our medicine cabinets. We know that 64 percent of users don't get their pills from a valid prescription. They're getting them from friends, family or another source, so removing pills from circulation is step one. You may have seen "pill return" or "medication take back" locations in your community, they are often at police stations or pharmacies. If you don't have a location to dispose of unused medications in your local area, Stericycle has donated Seal & Send envelopes, which are available through our website to help everyday Americans send in their unused medication for proper disposal. The second thing we want to do is make sure everyone starts speaking up about opioids with medical professionals. We found that one third of those who are prescribed opioids, don't know or don't understand their medication is actually an opioid drug. So we created an "Opioids: Warn Me" labels to make it easy to start that conversation with doctors and pharmacists about the risks of opioids and discuss possible alternatives. Designed to be displayed on an insurance card or pharmacy loyalty card, the 'Warn Me' labels are available individually as well as in bulk to help employers distribute them. Both the labels and Seal & Send envelopes can be ordered free of charge from [nsc.org/takeaction](https://www.nsc.org/takeaction). The change starts with us. ■





# The Deadliest Chemical in Wisconsin Workplaces

By Leslie Ptak  
Compliance Assistance Specialist, U.S. Department of Labor/OSHA

The most common chemical in Wisconsin workplaces also happens to be its deadliest. It is responsible for at least one work-related death every year in the state and many more cases of poisoned employees sent to the hospital. This chemical is carbon monoxide (CO), which is ever-present because of the ubiquity of gas and propane powered equipment in industry. Anytime this

equipment is operated in a poorly ventilated space, such as in winter weather when workplaces close up to save on energy bills, there is the potential for carbon monoxide poisonings to occur. What may be a safe environment with the dock doors open, can become deadly in a very short time with them shut.

Unfortunately, the Wisconsin OSHA offices have too many stories of

carbon monoxide poisoning that they have investigated. All of these took place within the past three years:

- A manufacturing employer thought a young worker was abusing opioids in the restroom. That was the only explanation they could think of for why she kept nodding off. Local EMS began treating the worker when the CO alarms on their equipment bags sounded. Further investigation



showed that the levels were about 200 parts per million (ppm).

- Eight drivers were waiting for the site mechanic to get their trucks started after a weekend of 10 below zero temperatures. The mechanic used a 1953 Allis Chalmers, propane powered forklift to charge the truck batteries. An hour later, the mechanic was found slumped over; they were sure he was having a heart attack. First responders found readings in the facility of 158 ppm of carbon monoxide, which explained the headaches, nausea, dizziness and chest tightness the drivers had all been experiencing.

- Employees working the fryer line operation in a food processing plant were poisoned. Twenty-five were taken to the hospital and five were formally admitted. It is suspected that exhaust of a natural gas burner was

the source of the CO.

- A maintenance employee was using a gas-powered pressure washer to clean the concrete floor of

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**Carbon monoxide is a gas created from the incomplete combustion of fuel-burning devices, such as industrial vehicles, gas-powered furnaces and portable equipment.**

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a laundry room. Eight hours after he began the task his manager found him dead, collapsed on the floor. Back calculations of his carboxyhemoglobin levels indicated that he had been exposed to carbon monoxide levels in excess of 24 times the OSHA permissible level.

- An employee working a late shift all alone was found dead by a co-worker at 4:00am the next day. Although the plant had a battery powered forklift, it was in the shop for servicing, and they had been using an LP forklift from another plant. When first responders entered the building, they found carbon monoxide levels of 320 ppm. Using surveillance video and back calculating the employee's exposure from his carboxyhemoglobin levels, it was estimated that CO levels at the time he died were 1,591 ppm.

Carbon monoxide is a gas created from the incomplete combustion of fuel-burning devices, such as industrial vehicles, gas-powered furnaces and portable equipment (e.g. generators, saws, etc.) As is clear from the events listed above, CO poisoning occurs in all industries to



any size employer. The only common denominator is the use of equipment that burns a carbon-based fuel.

There are three reasons why carbon monoxide is so deadly:

First, our bodies prefer carbon monoxide to oxygen. The way our bodies are supposed to work is that hemoglobin, a protein molecule on red blood cells, binds with oxygen and then travels through our blood vessels to deliver oxygen to where it is needed. However, if carbon

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**The technology exists to have prevented every case of carbon monoxide poisoning mentioned above.**

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monoxide is in the air we breathe, hemoglobin chooses CO over oxygen. Instead of creating oxygen rich oxyhemoglobin, a chemical called carboxyhemoglobin is formed, totally halting the body's oxygen delivery system. We become anoxic, starved of oxygen.

Second, the gas is odorless, colorless and tasteless and is emitted from sources we are familiar with, usually a fork lift. A powered industrial truck can be used for years with no problems, until one day that truck experiences some "problems." Suddenly, someone, or a group of employees, becomes ill—same truck in a different working condition, vastly

different outcome. Because the invisible carbon monoxide gas it emits gave no warning, such as an odor or color, the poisoning happens with no warning.

Finally, carbon monoxide poisoning is an imposter. The symptoms are familiar—nausea, headaches, light-headedness. These typical symptoms mirror common illnesses; people do not suspect that they are experiencing a workplace poisoning. The first thing that might come to their minds is that they are coming down with the flu and need a nap and a dose of Benadryl™. They do not appreciate the life and death need to get out of the work environment immediately.

The technology exists to have prevented every case of carbon monoxide poisoning mentioned above. That technology is a direct reading CO monitor with an alarm that goes off at levels below the PEL. The need for a direct reading monitor reflects the ability of carbon monoxide to accumulate quickly. The alarm addresses the stealthy nature of the threat. Direct reading monitoring helps employers comply with two OSHA standards: 1910.132(a), the personal protective equipment standard that requires employers to evaluate all potential inhalation hazards<sup>1</sup>; and 1910.178(i)(1), which states that "Concentration levels of carbon monoxide gas created by powered industrial truck operations shall not exceed the levels specified in §1910.1000<sup>2</sup>.

Next, everyone needs to understand that carbon monoxide is a potential problem. Very few employers purchase carbon monoxide gas for their operations, but every tank of propane gas or container of gasoline used as fuel has the potential to generate carbon monoxide gas. This is where hazard communication training is useful—make sure you address the potential hazard with all employees. In two of the cases mentioned above, the CO was found because the alarms on the EMS personnel's equipment bag went off, not because the employer suspected a poisonous gas.

Another measure an employer can take includes preventive maintenance of all gas and propane-powered equipment. At every regularly scheduled service the exhaust emissions should be checked for carbon monoxide levels.

It is really very simple. The deadly effects of the most common chemical in Wisconsin workplaces can be easily remedied by complying with three of OSHA's most common standards, personal protective equipment, powered industrial trucks and hazard communication. If you have questions, feel free to call your local OSHA office. ■

*The OSHA developed this article for informational purposes only. It does not necessarily reflect the official views of OSHA or the U.S. Department of Labor. Winter 2018.*

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<sup>1</sup> 29 CFR 1910.132, *Personal Protective Equipment*, requires an employer to assess the workplace to determine if hazards, including chemical hazards, are present, or are likely to be present, in a manner capable of causing injury or impairment in the function of any part of the body through absorption, inhalation, or physical contact.

<sup>2</sup> The OSHA permissible exposure limit (PEL) for carbon monoxide is 50 ppm.

# Safety on the Farm: Why Training is Key

By Ben Jones  
Trillium Hill Farm Owner & Managing Partner

Production agriculture is associated with an assortment of occupational hazards. While many consumers purchase products with direct ties to agriculture each and every day, they may not realize that agricultural personnel are at greater risk of physical injury—or even death—than most other industries.

Traumatic injuries are a common occurrence because of working with heavy machinery and animals. Respiratory illnesses from chemical exposure or methane gases pertaining to manure containment are often deadly. In an attempt to counter the higher risk associated with production agriculture, efforts are being made to ensure a safe work environment.

Other industries offer very specific roles and allow their employees to settle into the duties they will carry out on a daily basis. This repetition allows workers in other industries to focus in on the safety protocols required for their unique position.

A few examples would be a heavy machinery operator's alertness to his or her surroundings during operation, a car mechanic ensuring proper ventilation while working on a running car indoors to account for carbon monoxide or a medical professional recognizing the acute or chronic signs of a contagious underlying illness.

Production agriculture workers require extensive safety knowledge



from all of these various fields as they operate heavy machinery on a daily basis, work with methane producing waste products and treat sick animals regularly.

As production agriculture's workers jobs vary on a daily basis depending on what needs to be done that day, one may overlook a simple safety protocol that could very well cost them their life.

I have personally fallen subject to such carelessness while placing an agitator in our 10 million gallon manure lagoon. The agitator was a PTO-driven propeller on wheels that required a tractor to back it in. With the walls of the lagoon at 45-degree angles, I backed the agitator in stopping the tractor right at the edge to ensure it was on level ground.

As I lowered the agitator to begin agitation it caught on some solid manure floating near the surface pulling the tractor back six to 12 inches. This was just enough to put the tractor over the cusp of the embankment.

Everything happened so fast that I

barely had time to react. The tractor was already submersed up to the top step by the time I opened the door. I faced the mental dilemma to jump out of the tractor and risk drowning in the quicksand-like manure or seal myself inside the tractor and hope it didn't become entirely submersed.

In milliseconds I opted to seal myself in. As the manure began to rise around the entirety of the cab of the tractor, manure started pouring in through the electrical ports located behind the seat. I quickly removed my shirt and used it to plug the holes.

The tractor—which was 13 feet tall—sank a total of 11 feet. This left the windows and door to the cab suctioned shut. While manure entering through the cab was not exactly a pleasant experience, danger quickly presented itself as methane began displacing the little air I possessed within the tractor cab.

Fortunately for me, that was not the end of the story and I walked away that day with only methane poisoning and oxygen deprivation. However, numerous individuals within production agriculture lose their lives on a yearly basis due to methane alone.

That is why it is imperative to preach safety in all lines of work. Employees need to know the proper safety techniques for all the job duties they could perform on any given day. Safety training and preparation is key to ensuring everyone stays safe on the job. ■





# Everest: Climbing Beyond Our Limits...Safely

By Lori Schneider  
Founder, Empowerment Through Adventure

How can a mountain better prepare us for life? At 29,035 feet, there's a lot to learn. The most important safety lessons are equally as relevant on icy mountain slopes as they are when conquering our everyday safety challenges at work. Preparation, anticipation of obstacles and teamwork are the keys to success. Join me, Lori Schneider, keynote speaker at the 2018 WSC Annual Safety and Health Conference, as I share my stories of climbing the highest peak on each of the seven continents, culminating with a successful summit of Mt. Everest in 2009. In climbing, getting

up is optional, getting back down is mandatory. When it comes to safety, it's a lot like that in business too! So why would a 52-year-old woman who had been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis just ten years prior, choose to climb a deadly mountain like Everest you ask? Concerned for my health, safety and future, mountain climbing didn't seem like a logical career choice after being a classroom teacher for twenty years. Growing up in Wisconsin, climbing the world's tallest mountains sounded very risky, so when it came to training for this new job, I took my safety very seriously. The



teacher in me approached the challenge much like you would in business. Find the best teachers, learn

the skills, follow the safety standards needed to complete the job, get your hands on the best possible safety and protective gear, practice, test yourself, practice more, prepare for the worst case scenario, then improvise when all the great planning fails. Set the highest standards for yourself and your teammates, then have a fall back plan in place.

## My Story

The morning I woke up with a body half numb and received a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis was the day my life changed forever back in 1999. I went from a whole person to a broken one, with the placement of that one little foot on the floor as I tried to get out of bed. Nothing made sense in my life anymore and I became a person who had lost all sense of self. After wading through the tears and fears of what would happen to my world, I stepped away a wounded person, with injuries so deep I felt they would never heal. My heart was heavy, and my brain was aching from thoughts of what would become of me. I panicked and ran away from my life, fearing that I needed to gain independence while I still had my strength. I left my home, my husband, my 20-year teaching career, and the sense of purpose that I once had. I slipped into the void of that deep emotional crevasse, unhooked from my safety lines that once would have pulled me back to reality.

As part of my need to escape my MS, I began to run at a pace that even I could not keep up with. I was determined to prove to myself that I was still in control of my physical body. Goals, which once would not have been important, seemed to drive me beyond my normal limits.



Why mountain climbing? It seemed my need to escape was based on a need to be isolated as well. In the mountains, I could hide. There, I insulated myself with others who were strong and skilled, possessing a no excuse attitude. Climbing gave me time to think, to process all the carnage left after my runaway. Statistics show that climbing Everest is a dangerous proposition. People die. People are frozen in time on the side of a slope, or deep in a crevasse, never to return. People are buried under walls of snow as daily avalanches scar the terrain. At 25,000 feet, you enter the Death Zone where human life begins the process of dying due to lack of oxygen. Yes, Everest was a scary



place I must admit. So why was I not afraid? I prepared thoroughly, then went to my mental 'safety zone' while on Everest. My mantra was 'Don't Let Fear In'. This is more than a climbing adventure; it is my journey of moving beyond a diagnosis of MS and gaining the skills needed to safely scale the 'Seven Summits'. It is a story of training for mountain safety, right here in Wisconsin. It's about keeping a level head, rehearsing for possible hazards, and using creative solutions when all else fails! It's a story of overcoming the mountains and obstacles we all face in business and in life. Simple mistakes can be costly. Safety and teamwork are everyone's responsibility! ■



WSC SEEN & HEARD

STAFF NEWS:

Ana Hamil  
Customer Relations  
Specialist

Ana started with Wisconsin Safety Council at the end of November. She comes to WSC with over 25 years of experience in sales and management, having worked in retail, direct sales, construction and manufacturing. Her role as a Customer Relations Specialist is to work with companies to help create private and public trainings, as well as increase WSC's membership.

Stephanie Blumer  
Administrative Assistant

Stephanie joined Wisconsin Safety Council in December as the organization's Administrative Assistant. She graduated in May 2017 with a Bachelors of Business Administration from St. Norbert College in De Pere, Wis. Stephanie will be working directly with members to place safety product orders, in addition to other administrative responsibilities.

Chevon Cook  
Training Manager

Chevon joined Wisconsin Safety Council in January as the organization's new Training Manager. Chevon has built risk and safety programs from the ground up and has more than 10 years of experience in safety education and training. She is an OSHA certified trainer and was previously a Field Safety Manager at QPS. Chevon has a bachelor's degree in Occupational and Environmental Safety and Health from UW-Whitewater.



Wisconsin Safety Council Executive Director Janet Metzger presents Cristal Gorsege of HellermannTyton with her Advanced Safety Certificate at an event in Madison.



Wisconsin Safety Council staff celebrate the holidays at the WSC office in Madison. Pictured from left to right: Barb Deans, Janet Metzger, Stephanie Blumer and Ana Hamil.



2018 SAFETY TRAINING

The Wisconsin Safety Council, a division of WMC, is Wisconsin's leading provider of safety training and programming. WSC offers training throughout the year at locations across the state or training at your facility.

WISAFETYCOUNCIL.ORG

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MSHA 8hr/DOT Refresher

JANUARY 22-25  
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FEBRUARY 15-16  
OSHA 10hr Voluntary Course for General Industry

FEBRUARY 23  
MSHA 8hr/DOT Refresher

MARCH 15  
RCRA Compliance for Hazardous Waste Generators Overview (AM)

MARCH 15  
DOT Hazmat Transportation Refresher (PM)

MARCH 19  
Confined Space, Train-the-Trainer

MARCH 20  
Lockout/Tagout, Train-the-Trainer (AM)



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