

# Breaking Ground

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## HEALTHCARE 2017: *Trends Driving Construction*

Children's Hospital  
of Pittsburgh  
of UPMC South



(Left-to-right) LSCI's Steve Basile, Jeff Lancaster, the late James Feeny, Robert Carroll (an OSHA compliance specialist) Scott Raymond, and Michael Rubeo celebrate Feeny's lifetime service recognition.

Jeff Lancaster believes in leading by example. When you tour the offices of the Wexford-based safety consulting firm, among the first things you'll notice is the wall of plaques commemorating the safety of Lancaster Safety Consulting's (LSCI) own workplace. Lancaster is particularly proud to share that in 13 years of business, LSCI has had zero reportable incidents. For a company that helps others navigate the volumes of Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) rules and regulations, such a track record adds enormous credibility.

"It's critical to get everyone from the owner on down to the temporary worker involved in the safety culture to understand we all share a common bond: we all want to go home unharmed at day's end," he stresses.

"Many of our customers have their own safety departments,"

Lancaster continues. "The biggest advantage we have as a third party is that we can be a non-political voice saying, 'These are your eyes and your hands. Don't you want to go home with them every night?' We're not the HR department. This isn't about their raise. We're there to change the culture."

LSCI is an independent private consultant that specializes in keeping its clients on the right side of OSHA. Its menu of services can include simply updating manuals and documentation annually or being a hands-on partner in fostering a world-class safety program. The latter involves regular inspections of facilities, leading training at specific jobs on a site or at a workplace and providing the documentation for both the training and the compliance.

"We are business consultants helping our clients to manage their safety. That starts with an evaluation," Lancaster explains, noting that clients have varying degrees of expectation about the depth

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of the evaluation. "That starts with what the law requires. Which OSHA regulations pertain to their operation? We help to develop the written programs for them. Along with that we develop training Powerpoint [presentations] that our trainers use on site. It's not just general training. It has to be job-specific, site-specific training. In a nutshell that's what we do: make sure they have the written programs and documentation; understand their record-keeping requirements; understand their new hiring requirements; their procedures for vendors, visitors and guests. It's all a matter of training. We train everyone; even office personnel who may never be exposed to hazardous situations may still face some hazards in their day-to-day situations."

Jeff Lancaster became a safety consultant upon graduating with a degree in business administration from Adrian College in 1976. While working for a national security and alarm system manufacturer, Lancaster toured plants and sites around the country, proposing security, access control and fire alarm systems. In the early 1990s, he noticed a change in what his customers were requiring.

"When I would go back to explain their fire alarm system or camera system they would ask if I had an evacuation program, a written plan? They didn't know where to get one," he recalls. "That's where I got the idea that there was a need for written programs in accordance to the law. The law is very specific. About half of the states have federally-run OSHA and about half are state-run but they all have the same minimum criteria, where the employer must assess the workplace for hazards, come up with formal written programs and train their workers."

Lancaster was part-owner of two different alarm companies during this period but decided to launch a full-time safety consulting business in 1998. After six years of growing his independent consultancy, he founded Lancaster Safety Consulting in 2004 and incorporated the following year. Working initially from a converted house on Sheraton Drive in Cranberry Township, LCSI grew to occupy the fourth floor of the offices at the Doubletree by Hilton (then the Sheraton Four Points) and more recently, to larger offices in Wexford at 100 Bradford Road.

LSCI started as a regional enterprise, limiting its territory by the distance needed to drive for sales and training calls. As its reputation grew, repeat clients asked LSCI to provide services in locations outside the Tri-state area. That meant hiring trainers but that also gave LSCI the chance to leverage those trainers – who were often times retired OSHA trainers or safety directors – to add clients in those areas. Today, LSCI has thousands of clients in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. The company employs 35 in Wexford and roughly 65 trainers and consultants working on a contract basis throughout the U.S.

"We work with many Fortune 500 and Fortune 100 companies but

our bread and butter are the small companies that are growing fast and are too busy with their trade to build a staff of full-time safety people. We fill that void," Lancaster explains.

LSCI's business model is built on its extensive understanding of the voluminous OSHA regulations. Employing consultants who are continuously monitoring regulatory changes and court decisions, LSCI offers a deep knowledge base to clients who are on the continuum of safety between responding to a compliance violation at one end and maintaining a world-class program at the other end. Many of LSCI's clients came to the company as a result of an OSHA violation. Most have stayed with LSCI because of its advocacy for constantly improving the safety culture of its clients.

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Lancaster Safety's business is split fairly evenly between corporate/industrial clients and construction clients. Lancaster doesn't downplay the challenges of maintaining a safe industrial site but points out that a construction job site offers challenges that fixed buildings do not.

"You can make the argument it's more difficult to have a world class safety program at a [construction] site because the conditions are changing every minute," he asserts. "In a plant you have four walls and maybe the only people in the plant are your own workers, working on their own machines in their own department, with their own procedures. You have a greater chance of safety success and avoiding injuries there. On a job site it can get windy. It can get rainy. You can get a delivery and someone on site who doesn't know they should check in to a site trailer. OSHA refers to a job site as a multi-employer workplace.

"To this day, most businesses – especially in construction – don't have a full understanding of their responsibility. They think 'that's the subcontractor not me; he's responsible' but it's their responsibility too. It's everyone's responsibility. The goal here is to prevent injury."

The biggest problem at construction sites is a lack of communication about expectations and awareness. For example, a driver is told to deliver materials to a site with no communication about the specific hazards like overhead power lines or muddy conditions. Lancaster says the misunderstanding of the shared responsibilities of a multi-employer workforce is commonplace in construction. From skilled workers up to the project owner, there is a duty to ensure that all parties on a construction site do not create a hazard for others. OSHA's general duty clause requires that owners and employers assess each workplace and make workers aware of all known hazards. Once hazards are identified, it's incumbent upon the employer to take steps to mitigate or eliminate the hazards. Those steps can come in the form of engineered solutions, like fences or barriers, or in personal protection solutions, like harnesses or hard hats. Lancaster says that this

heightened awareness is an important part of LSCI's training.

"Every contractor has a safety person, even if that's not their title. That's part of our training. They need to have somebody job site watching these hazards. A third-party consultant brings a lot to the table but not day-long supervision," he stresses. "There must be somebody educated to assess the workplace for hazards. We don't replace on-site supervision but we can become their best resource. We're just a phone call or email away. Sometimes we can resolve disputes just by reading the OSHA standards."

LSCI is a strong advocate for OSHA's Voluntary Protection Program (VPP), which exists to set a high bar for safety management and promotes a culture of continuous improvement for workplace safety. Lancaster says that the VPP designation – which LSCI has achieved – means that an employer is committed to a philosophy that the workplace can always be safer. He believes that has extended benefits that multiply the return on investment.

"You end up with a happier workforce that knows the employer cares about them," Lancaster says. "You retain your workforce. You have less turnover, which is immeasurable in a business. That attracts friends who want to work in a place that cares about their safety. You have less wasted human resources time spent training workers that leave in six months or a year. You have greater productivity from your workers. You have less injuries and lost work days with a trained and knowledgeable workforce so the employer is paying much less for their insurance. Accidents cost money."

"Just look at your workers comp costs and do the math on what would happen if there was half the number of accidents. It's phenomenal how much money is lost," he continues. "There is no good news from having an accident."

Lancaster sees more corporate leaders understanding the importance of a greater emphasis of safety. He sees more meetings starting with safety updates that review any recent injuries or injuries prevented. As LSCI has grown, it has been able to focus its efforts on educating industry and working to deepen the culture of a safe workplace with its clients. LSCI's founder seeks to constantly raise the bar in a field that is built upon the mistakes of the past.

"There's an old saying that the OSHA regulations are written in blood. It took until 1970 to form an agency because too many people weren't coming home healthy or coming home at all from work," says Lancaster. "Almost all the rules and regulations you see today come from somebody getting hurt. Doesn't it make sense to learn these requirements ahead of time, put them in place before someone gets hurt or dies at your site? The companies that agree become our clients. Not everybody understands or has the opportunity to be posed the alternative: Would you rather wait for somebody to get hurt to do something or put a little money into safety and save a ton of problems down the road?" **BG**



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