



AMERICAN SOCIETY OF
SAFETY PROFESSIONALS

Wichita Chapter

FALL 2026

SAFETY IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN CONVENIENCE!



Over the past several decades, thousands of military children have experienced the loss of a parent serving our nation. Because the vast majority of military fatalities involve male service members, many surviving spouses and caregivers face the challenge of raising children while coping with the emotional and financial impacts of their loss. Organizations such as the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) continue to provide support, resources, and community connections for military families navigating these challenges.

Welcome & Fall Safety Focus

As we enter the fall season, safety professionals face an increasingly complex risk environment. Traditional workplace hazards remain important, but emerging public health threats, food safety concerns, cybersecurity risks, and business continuity challenges are increasingly interconnected.

This edition focuses on several developing issues that highlight the expanding role of today's safety leaders:

- Major U.S. Cyclosporiasis Outbreak
- Building a Strong Food Safety Culture
- Operational Technology (OT) Cybersecurity Risks
- Emergency Communications and Mass Notification
- Fall Preparedness and Organizational Resilience

Just as workplace safety requires proactive planning, resilience against modern threats depends upon strong leadership, effective communication, and a culture that prioritizes preparedness before incidents occur.

Public Health Alert: Major Cyclosporiasis Outbreak Across the United States

An Unprecedented Seasonal Increase

Health officials are reporting one of the largest cyclosporiasis outbreaks ever recorded in the United States. Thousands of confirmed cases have been reported during the 2026 seasonal transmission period, with particularly high case counts in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, and West Virginia.

Federal investigators have identified shredded iceberg lettuce served at locations of a national fast-food restaurant chain as the likely source of a large multistate outbreak. While the source has been identified, investigations continue to determine the full scope of contamination and whether additional distribution channels were affected.

Understanding Cyclospora

Cyclosporiasis is caused by *Cyclospora cayetanensis*, a microscopic parasite that contaminates food and water. Symptoms include:

- Watery diarrhea
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite

Take time to enjoy the day!
It only takes a minute or two,
so relax and take in the view.

Tune in to the nature you've
been missing...
Chirps, tweets, and a little
hissing

Check out a sunrise or watch
the sun set...
I haven't seen two alike yet.

Look for creatures. They're all
around...
In the air and on the ground.

Take a brisk walk or just soak
up some sun...
Life is too short not to have
fun!



U.S. Food Safety at a Glance

 **48 Million** Americans experience a foodborne illness each year

 **128,000** hospitalizations annually
 **3,000** deaths from foodborne diseases each year

 **1 in 6** Americans will get sick from contaminated food this year

 Fresh produce is among the foods most frequently linked to outbreaks

- Weight loss
- Nausea
- Abdominal cramping

Unlike many foodborne illnesses, direct person-to-person transmission is unlikely because the parasite requires time outside the human body before becoming infectious.

Why Safety Professionals Should Care

The outbreak demonstrates several recurring principles familiar to safety professionals:

- Supply chain complexity creates hidden vulnerabilities.
- Delayed detection often increases overall impact.
- Traceability is critical during an incident investigation.
- Communication and reporting systems are essential for effective response.

Organizations involved in food production, logistics, warehousing, retail, hospitality, and emergency management should review supplier controls, emergency response procedures, and communication plans.

Prevention Reminders

- Wash hands before handling food.
- Rinse fruits and vegetables thoroughly.
- Refrigerate cut produce promptly.
- Seek medical attention for persistent diarrhea.

Food Safety Culture: Beyond Compliance

Safety Culture Is a Leadership Responsibility

For years, many organizations treated food safety culture as an audit requirement. Today, leading companies recognize it as a direct indicator of organizational maturity and operational excellence.

Food safety culture represents shared beliefs, values, and behaviors that influence how individuals make decisions when nobody is watching.

Strong cultures are visible when:

- Employees report concerns without fear.
- Leaders support safety under production pressure.
- Near misses become learning opportunities.
- Safety expectations remain consistent during audits and daily operations.

Everyone Owns Food Safety

Food safety cannot reside solely with a technical department.

Every function contributes:

- Operations
- Engineering
- Maintenance
- Procurement
- Warehousing
- Transportation
- Executive Leadership

The strongest organizations view food safety as a business responsibility rather than a compliance obligation.

Cybersecurity & OT Risk: By the Numbers

 **30+** Minnesota water systems impacted in a coordinated OT cyber incident

 **8 States** reported similar water and wastewater utility intrusions

 **80%+** of critical infrastructure in the U.S. is privately owned and operated

 **OT Systems** control physical assets including pumps, valves, motors, conveyors, and industrial processes

 **Remote Access** remains one of the most common pathways used to compromise industrial control systems

 **Key Question:** How long can your operation safely run in manual mode if automation becomes unavailable?

Better Culture Means Lower Risk

Research continues to show that organizations with strong food safety cultures experience:

- Fewer handling errors
- Reduced recall exposure
- Improved employee engagement
- Better regulatory outcomes
- Enhanced brand protection

For safety leaders, food safety culture reinforces a broader principle: organizational culture drives behavior, and behavior drives risk.

Emerging Threat: Cybersecurity and Operational Technology

Recent Water Utility Attacks Highlight Critical Vulnerabilities

In late July, multiple municipal water utilities reported unauthorized access to operational technology systems.

Attackers reportedly altered controller settings, changed passwords, and disrupted operator access. Several affected facilities temporarily shifted to manual operations while restoring control of systems.

While disruptions were limited, the incidents highlight a growing concern for organizations that rely on industrial control systems.

Understanding OT Security

Operational Technology (OT) controls physical processes such as:

- Pumps
- Valves
- Motors
- Industrial control systems
- Manufacturing equipment
- Facility automation systems

Unlike traditional IT systems, successful attacks against OT environments can create safety, environmental, and operational consequences.

The Business Continuity Connection

The most important lesson from recent incidents wasn't how attackers gained access.

It was how facilities continued operating after the intrusion.

Organizations that maintained:

- Manual operating capability
- Trained personnel
- Backup procedures
- Emergency response plans

were able to minimize disruption.

Safety and business continuity leaders should ask a simple question:

How long could we safely operate if automation became unavailable today?

From Awareness to Action: Modern Emergency Communications

Connecting Intelligence, Exposure Awareness, and Notification

Organizations today face a growing range of threats:

- Severe weather
- Infrastructure interruptions
- Cybersecurity incidents
- Civil disturbances
- Public health emergencies

Many organizations collect enormous amounts of information but still struggle to determine what events actually impact their employees and operations.

Leading organizations are moving toward integrated approaches that combine:

1. Threat monitoring
2. Asset visibility
3. Emergency notifications
4. Incident workflows
5. Employee accountability

The objective is simple:

Receive the right information, identify who is affected, and communicate quickly.

Emergency notification systems continue to be one of the most effective tools available for protecting personnel during rapidly changing events.

Fall Preparedness Corner

Seasonal Risk Management Checklist

Fall offers an excellent opportunity to prepare for winter hazards.

Severe Weather Planning

- Review shelter locations.
- Verify emergency contacts.
- Test notification systems.
- Conduct tabletop exercises.

Workforce Readiness

- Update emergency response rosters.
- Review contractor accountability processes.
- Verify critical training requirements.

Business Continuity

- Identify critical operational dependencies.
- Review backup communication methods.
- Evaluate manual operating procedures.

Supply Chain Resilience

- Verify supplier emergency plans.
- Assess transportation vulnerabilities.
- Review inventory contingency strategies.

Professional Development Spotlight

The role of the safety professional continues to expand beyond traditional occupational safety.

Areas gaining increasing importance include:

- Emergency Management
- Business Continuity Planning
- Cybersecurity Awareness
- Critical Infrastructure Protection
- Organizational Culture Development
- Supply Chain Risk Management
- Public Health Preparedness

The most successful safety leaders understand that protecting people, operations, reputation, and communities requires an integrated approach to risk management.

Upcoming Chapter Activities

ASSP Wichita Chapter

Members are encouraged to visit the chapter website regularly for:

- Monthly chapter meetings
- Professional development opportunities
- Plant tours
- Networking events
- Technical presentations
- Local Employment Job Posting

Website: <https://wichita.assp.org/>

Closing Thoughts

The challenges facing organizations today extend far beyond traditional safety concerns. Public health outbreaks, food safety issues, cyber threats, infrastructure disruptions, and extreme weather events all have the potential to affect employees and business operations.

The common thread is resilience.

Organizations that build strong cultures, maintain robust communication capabilities, invest in preparedness, and continuously evaluate emerging risks are best positioned to protect people and sustain operations when disruptions occur.

Stay Safe. Stay Prepared. Stay Connected.

The Wichita ASSP Chapter Leadership Team

