



White Paper

The SafeAlign® Leadership Development System

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Executive Summary

High-performing organizations build safety leadership skills in managers and frontline leaders. Those who invest in leadership development see fewer injuries, a more engaged workforce, lower turnover, and higher performance.

DEKRA's SafeAlign® System equips front-line leaders with practical, neuroscience-based skills to reduce risk and strengthen culture by improving the quality and cadence of safety leadership activities. The approach builds leadership credibility and creates conditions where change is embraced, and workers are fully engaged. Safety is fundamentally integrated into each leader's daily workflow rather than added as extra work.

This white paper introduces the core principles of SafeAlign. It shows how this comprehensive system strengthens frontline leadership capabilities, resulting in a stronger culture, better exposure control, and fewer injuries. It also clarifies the implementation steps, metrics, and required sustainability practices.

▶ SafeAlign is a practical, evidence-based development pathway that pairs structured learning with in-field support, ensuring that new skills are practiced, reinforced, and sustained in daily leadership. This field-based application is further strengthened by a structured sustainability approach that builds the capability of senior leaders to engage their own frontline leaders to reinforce lasting cultural change, control serious injury and fatality risk, improve well-being, and build teams that thrive.

A decade of real-world data, validated by the London Business School, demonstrated that sites using SafeAlign reduced injuries by over 30% in two years. ***Read the complete study here.*** This is not a theory or compliance exercise — it's measurable, sustained improvement in safety outcomes and workplace culture.

How It Works

SafeAlign develops leadership skills by focusing on safety activities that reduce exposure to harm, thereby reducing risk, injuries, and catastrophe. It consists of four steps:

1. Laying the Foundation

Effective leadership development is tailored to an organization's real exposures and challenges. A governance group is established to:

- Set objectives and desired outcomes
- Recommend workshop sequence and rollout plan
- Develop communication strategies
- Establish activity targets and tracking metrics
- Remove barriers to technology and implementation
- Align around desired culture attributes
- Define the process for onboarding new leaders

2. Developing Skills

Frontline leaders and managers build capabilities through a customized learning approach that connects directly to daily responsibilities. Each learning experience blends practical education on exposure reduction leverage points, ensuring immediate application in the workplace. Multiple delivery modalities are available to best fit with the organization's approach to development.

These skills are reinforced through in-field support, where leaders apply what they've learned and are provided guidance that strengthens confidence, consistency, and accountability.

3. Delivering Results

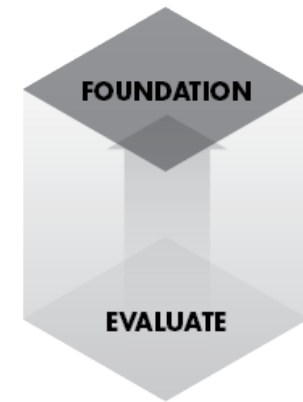
Applying and reinforcing the skills of SafeAlign delivers measurable results—leaders perform higher-quality safety activities, demonstrate stronger transformational leadership, and consistently reduce exposure to harm. The outcome is improved human and organizational performance, fewer injuries, reduced severity of incidents, powered by stronger leadership skill across teams.

Learning is sustained through supported practice in the field, where leaders apply SafeAlign principles, strengthen accountability, and build the confidence to use best practices consistently. A critical element of this step is tracking leader engagement and exposure control, ensuring that leaders at all levels apply their newly developed skills and fulfill their commitment to teams working safely. Tracking also builds credibility by documenting exposures identified through safety activities and demonstrating visible progress toward a safer culture.

4. Creating Sustainability

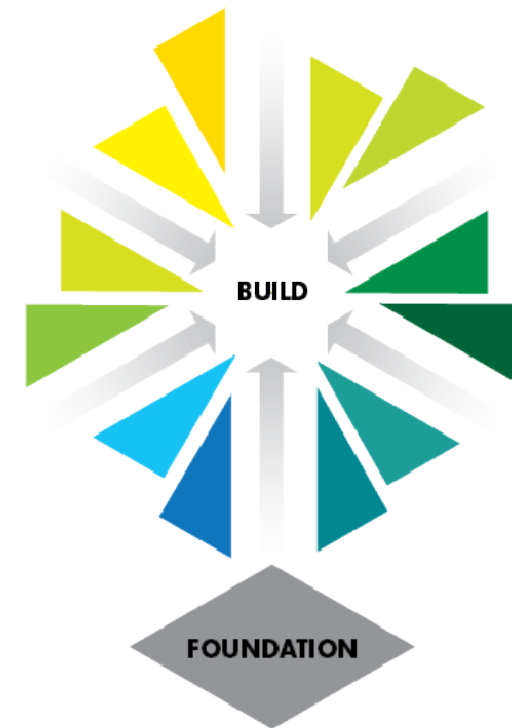
Creating Sustainability ensures that leadership skills, accountability, and exposure control continue to strengthen over time. This is achieved through field support, governance oversight to prevent drift, new-leader onboarding, and ongoing tracking of leader engagement and exposure reduction. The addition of Train-the-Trainer development enables internal leaders to carry SafeAlign forward, embedding best practices across future generations and securing long-term cultural change. DEKRA can provide longer-term sustainability support if preferred to lock in and continue improvement.

Core Methodology



LAY FOUNDATION

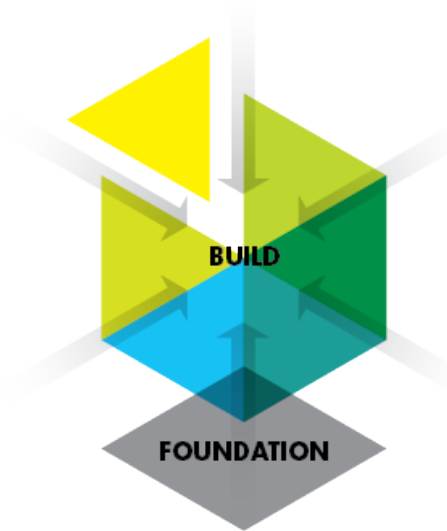
- Oversight and Governance
- Timeline and Milestones
- Engagement Scorecard
- Target Setting
- Install Technology Platform



BUILD CAPABILITIES

Learning modules include: workshops, infield coaching, and technology based refreshers, reminders and support

- ▶ **Leading with Safety**
- ▶ **Safety Conversations That Matter**
- ▶ **Spotting Hazards And Reducing Risk**
- ▶ **Fostering Wellbeing**
- ▶ **Psychological Safety for a Speak Up Culture**
- ▶ **Connected Leaders, Connected Teams**
- ▶ **Controlling Brain-Centered Hazards™**
- ▶ **Preventing Soft Tissue Injuries**
- ▶ **Engaged Leader Field Support**



DELIVER RESULTS

- Higher quality safety activities
- Enhanced safety leadership skills
- Reduced exposure
- Less Injuries
- Improved Human Performance Reliability



CREATE SUSTAINABILITY

- Building Engaged Leader Field Support
 - Reinforce engagement
 - Track and reduce exposure
- Refresher training and new leader onboarding
- Utilize system reminders
- Engaged Leader Field Support



SafeAlign®
SYSTEM

The concept of building blocks: an important part grouped together with many other similar items to form a entity.

All the components of the SafeAlign® System come together to achieve next-level safety.

The DEKRA Approach:

A System for Continual Improvement

The SafeAlign System has multiple modules, each of which includes a classroom component, and most are supported with an in-field support component.

For most organizations, Leading with Safety® and Safety Conversations that Matter are the first modules, followed by a new learning module every two to three months.

Workshops are designed for live engagement by DEKRA consultants or by selected SMEs to be developed for in-house leader engagement (Train-the-Trainer). Delivery modality is customized for what works within a specific organization with a focus on change and impact.



Module 1: Leading With Safety

This module introduces foundational concepts and provides a clear, consistent definition of safety, helping leaders and teams align around a common understanding. Participants explore the concept of exposure to harm and why focusing on exposure is more effective than focusing on injury prevention and historical safety statistics, in keeping with the sentiment, 'the absence of injury does not equal safe work'.

The session also shows how leader actions directly shape culture and performance. Each participant leaves with a Personal Safety Vision, a statement of their individual commitment to safety that becomes a touchstone for future learning and guides intentional leadership practice.

Module 2: Safety Conversations That Matter

This module strengthens leaders' ability to engage differently—shifting from giving information to creating dialogue that builds trust and ownership. Participants learn to conduct impactful safety conversations and briefings that go beyond checklists to uncover real exposure to harm and support continuous improvement.

The session emphasizes leadership presence and engagement techniques that create moments that matter—interactions that influence safer choices, reinforce accountability, and strengthen culture. Leaders practice creating meaningful conversations that increase potential, increase intentionality within engagements with individuals and the wider team, and help teams stay present and deliberate in their decisions and actions. These skills enable

leaders to foster participation in safe work planning discussions and safer decision-making across their teams.

Module 3: Spotting Hazards And Reducing Risk

This module develops leaders' ability to identify and address hazardous conditions, actions, and circumstances before they result in harm. Participants are introduced to the BEGIN strategy, a neuroscience-based, practical approach designed to help truly see exposure to harm, anticipating change, and taking timely action with their teams.

The session emphasizes how to detect both immediate and potential hazards, as well as how to engage employees and other leaders in meaningful discussions about the changing level of risk. Leaders practice turning such scenarios into opportunities for engagement, ensuring hazards are not only identified but effectively controlled. By applying the BEGIN strategy, leaders build consistency in hazard recognition, strengthen team awareness, and reinforce a proactive culture of exposure reduction.

Module 4: Fostering Wellbeing

This module strengthens leaders' ability to support well-being through everyday proactive actions, intentional listening, and appropriate responses to distress. Participants learn to notice signs of strain or disengagement, respond in ways that build resilience and coping skills, and understand how each decision sends a signal about keeping safe and well during the work.

The session reinforces that a thriving team is a safer team. When leaders enable rather than fix, they create conditions

where wellbeing and safety align, empowering teams to engage, look out for one another, and perform safely within a high-performance organization.

Module 5: Psychological Safety for a Speak Up Culture

The session emphasizes practical leadership actions that encourage open dialogue and strengthen collaboration, showing how psychological safety and exposure reduction work hand in hand. Leaders learn to create a culture where speaking up is both expected, accepted, and celebrated—where pausing to think, question, or raise concern is recognized as an act of care and accountability. Together, these actions enhance engagement, reduce exposure, and strengthen organizational resilience.

The session emphasizes practical leadership actions that encourage open dialogue and strengthen collaboration, showing how psychological safety and exposure reduction work hand in hand. Leaders learn to create a culture where speaking up is both expected and accepted—where taking a moment to question, reflect, or raise a concern is recognized as an act of care and accountability. These actions enhance engagement, reduce exposure, and strengthen organizational resilience. Speaking up is an outcome every team wants, skilled leaders create the context for this to occur and add protective value.

Module 6: Connected Leaders, Connected Teams

This module helps leaders examine how their everyday actions, decisions, and signals shape team culture — particularly in high-exposure environments. Leaders will explore how good intentions can miss the mark, the

messages conveyed by silence, and how even small actions can either strengthen or erode alignment around safety and risk.

Built around five core themes—intent vs. impact, recognizing and responding to drift, reinforcing expectations through feedback, leading with vigilance, and building trust—the session highlights how leadership awareness and timely action are essential to preventing cultural drift toward incidents. Participants leave with sharper insight into how their choices influence exposure to harm and with a clear commitment to send stronger, more connected signals that sustain trust and a culture of safety. The best leaders feel the heart-beat of their teams and are in lock step with their reality on a given day and know how to support to make work safer.

Module 7: Controlling Brain-Centered Hazards™

This module introduces leaders to the neuroscience behind everyday decision-making and the seven Brain-Centered Hazards (naturally occurring precursors that cause all of us to sometimes miss important information) that increase vulnerability to critical error. Participants learn how these cognitive shortcuts and biases—such as complacency, rushing, distraction, fatigue, or overconfidence—can compromise safety by driving habitual responses instead of deliberate, mindful action.

The session emphasizes how to recognize and manage these hazards in the workplace, equipping leaders with practical techniques to support their teams in noticing and addressing error-prone situations that impact safety, quality

and efficiency. By strengthening human performance reliability leaders reduce exposure to harm, and build a culture where awareness and reflection are part of daily operations. The safest performing teams have one thing in common, a focus on working with precision and noticing when that is likely not to occur.

Module 8: Preventing Soft Tissue Injuries

This module designed by sports therapists and ergonomic experts addresses one of the most common and costly challenges organizations face—soft tissue injuries, which often represent more than half of all workplace incidents. Participants learn to recognize and address the nine Load Factors that contribute to these injuries.

Leaders practice engaging employees in conversations that focus on decisions related to reducing the load on the body and building physical capacity, making prevention both practical and sustainable. The session also provides clear steps for identifying, discussing, and controlling soft tissue exposures, equipping leaders to reduce injuries, lower costs, and build a healthier, more resilient workforce. Teams make decisions everyday on whether to overexert themselves or rather to keep their bodies safe, their leaders are influential in such decisions.

Module 9: Engaged Leader Field Support

Field support is a core component of SafeAlign, powered by a structured professional coaching methodology grounded in current research and the neuroscience of behavior change. This module equips leaders to grow and develop others through intentional engagement in the field. These



conversations reinforce the effectiveness of SafeAlign activities while strengthening critical leadership actions such as intentional listening, engaging with curiosity, modeling accountability, and prompting self-reflection and impactful action plans. This approach hones required leadership engagement skills that align other leaders to ensure work is happening safely without exception. The result is stronger leaders, safer outcomes, and improved organizational performance. In doing so, the module builds inter-leadership team capability, strengthens accountability, and embeds cultural change that endures.

Conclusion

Organizations that are serious about strengthening safety leadership invest in a proven, custom-tailored system that develops real skills, reinforces them, and sustains them over time.

For three decades, thousands of leaders worldwide have advanced their effectiveness collaboratively applying DEKRA's proven framework combines powerful engagement skills, exposure-focused learning, in-field and applied support, and governance practices that embed accountability. This structure delivers consistent, practical development that reaches deep into organizations while adapting to each client's unique culture and needs.

Backed by DEKRA's expertise in leadership, culture, and safety change management, SafeAlign has been shown to reduce injuries, strengthen leadership capacity, and create more engaged and resilient workforces. With SafeAlign, organizations don't just improve safety—they build the internal capability to ensure performance change gains that endure.

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