History of the Safety Movement in America

- Early America:
  - Personal safety was simple – survival
  - Accidents were attributed to “acts of God” and “Fate” or “Luck”
- America was 95% rural
- First safety innovation, the Boston Light in 1716, was designed to protect good being shipped from Europe; an indirect plus was that it also provided increased safety for crews and passengers.
Early America

• Most early safety efforts were designed to protect property, not human lives.
• Fire protection – Ben Franklin founded the first fire department in Philadelphia in 1736.
• Also in 1736, the first fire insurance company was established. “The Contribution” had Ben as one of its directors.
Early America

- Green Tree Company (a competitor of The Contribution) – First insurance company to offer varying premiums to homeowners based on increased risk.
  - First attempt to encourage and reward preventive aspect of safety.
  - Offered lowered premiums to homeowners who removed shade trees that were close to their homes to allow fire fighters and their equipment better access to the fire. Is this approach still used today?
American Revolution to Industrial Revolution

• America moving from rural to urban life, due to mills and factories
• Trade Societies – forerunners of modern unions. First to recognize the need for worker safety. First trade society formed in 1794, the Federal Society of Journeymen Cordwainers. Paid sickness and death benefits to members or their widows.
• Boston forms its first Board of Health in 1799 with Paul Revere as its President.
Industrial Revolution

- Boston Board of Health
  - Could inspect stores, vessels, factories, and houses for health hazards.
  - Had the power to levy fines and require the offender to remove a hazard at his own expense.
- Safety of workers generally considered to be their own responsibility, not that of the employer.
- Insurance carriers covered property, not people.
Industrial Revolution

• Railroad, mining and steel production in the mid-nineteenth century brought a tremendous increase in accidents.
• Injury and death from accidents still considered the price of progress.
Industrial Revolution

- First unions
  - Strikes held to be illegal by the courts at the time – considered conspiracy.
  - Until a landmark decision by Massachusetts Supreme Court which overturned the conspiracy doctrine, paving the way for organized labor.
- Early railroad unions organized to fight for safety and accident compensation.
Industrial Revolution

• The efforts of organized labor to gain safer and healthier working conditions and shorter hours was eventually successful, but not without severe conflicts during the mid-19th to early 20th century.
• Factory mutual insurance (1835) – Had no clauses for the protection of workers – only the contents and structure could be insured.
Mid to Late 19th Century

- Introduction of three major industries increased worker hazards and risks considerably.
  - Railroading
  - Mining
  - Steel production
- Increased amputations and crushing injuries.
Mid to late 19th Century

• 1869 – Mine safety law in Pennsylvania required that all mines have two exits.
• 1869 – First bureau of labor statistics established. First attempt to collect data on accidents. Evidence of some public concern.
• Still safety conditions with the workers’ welfare in mind was not evident.
Late 19\textsuperscript{th} Century

- Laissez Faire attitude of government until the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century.
- 1887 – Interstate Commerce Commission formed. Gave the federal government broad regulatory powers (Could regulate safety among firms involved in interstate commerce).
Late 19th Century

- Just prior to the turn of the century, significant changes in safety came about as a result of the concern over fire safety.
  - 1894 – Underwriters’ Laboratory (Chicago) was formed to investigate fire hazards involved with the use of electricity.
  - 1896 – National Fire Protection Association established to develop standards for fire fighting equipment and methods of fire protection.
Early 20th Century

• 1900 – 1920 was a Progressive Period with regard to safety in the U.S.
• Major disasters that occurred provided evidence that people were still accepting death and injury as the price of progress. Government involvement in safety matters was also nonexistent. All this was about to change.
Early 20th Century

- Two events that dramatically affected safety progress:
- Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire in New York City (1911) – Claimed 145 lives, most victims were young girls. After inspection, it was found that exit doors were locked; fire escapes blocked by machinery; fire fighting equipment was inoperable. This disaster resulted in a great public outcry over the failure of man’s responsibility to foresee and prevent tragedy.
Early 20th Century

- First Worker compensation law passed by Wisconsin legislature – 1911.
- Provided for hospital expenses and a percentage of wages for injured workers as well as benefits to survivors if death resulted.
- Employers found it a compelling financial incentive to PREVENT accidents rather than pay large premiums for compensation insurance.
Early 20th Century

• National Safety Council formed (1913) – national organization for the promotion of safety.
• 1913 – U.S. Department of Labor formed – the real beginning of federal influence in the field of safety.
• 1936 – Walsh-Healy Act. Forerunner of today’s Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA). Established basic health and safety standards for work done on Federal contracts exceeding $10,000.
Mid 20\textsuperscript{th} Century

- WWII years – decline in total number of accidents.
  - Increase in work accidents because of war time expansion.
  - Decrease in motor vehicle accidents due to rationing of fuel, vehicle parts, rubber, glass and metal.
- Peacetime in the 50’s (after Korean conflict) saw accident rates drop due to improved safety conditions.
Mid 20th Century

• By the 60’s, deaths and injuries due to motor vehicle, industry, and consumer products were on the rise.
• Four major pieces of legislation from 1966 to 1974 were passed to limit the increasing accident rates.
Highway Safety Act of 1966

- Established uniform highway safety programs for all states.
- Carrot on a stick principle
- Eventually 18 program standards in all, e.g. motorcycle safety, emergency medical services, highway engineering, vehicle inspection, accident investigation, highway beautification, driver education, information services, and vehicle testing.
Occupational Safety & Health Act (OSHA) - 1970

- Develop and enforce job safety standards
- Monitor job-related illnesses and injuries
- Provide research to solve occupational safety and health problems
Consumer Product Safety Act - 1972

• Purpose was to protect the public from unsafe products
• Sets and enforces safety standards for consumer products.
• Effectiveness of OSHA and CPSC for decade of 1979-1989
  – Workplace deaths decreased 28%
  – Death rate for home accidents associated with consumer products fell 9%
National 55 MPH Speed Limit - 1974

- 1975 – Saw an immediate decline in the # of motor vehicle deaths. Deaths dropped by 17% in one year.
- States were permitted to drop the 55 mph speed limit on interstate highways in 1996
- Motor vehicle death rates have begun to rise again.
Present Day

• 1986 – Division of Injury Control established within the Centers for Disease Control
Conclusions, Observations, Inferences, etc.

• A “comprehensive” approach toward accident prevention and injury control has more or less evolved.

• Comprehensive approach:
  – Education/behavior change
  – Laws and regulations
  – Product design and automatic protection
Conclusions, Observations, Inferences, etc.

• Unfortunately, disasters, both man-made and natural, have historically done as much as man’s foreseeability to effect safety measures in America.

• Safety trend contributors also include:
  – Legislation
  – The Media
  – Human values – I.e. the preserving and protecting of oneself, family and friends
Conclusions, Observations, Inferences, etc.

• Change in philosophy regarding safety – “fate,” “God’s Will” not as prevalent as in the past; accidents are considered the result mostly of human behavior or irresponsibility.

• Growth in government involvement in the safety field:
  – Enforcement; standards; research
Conclusions, Observations, Inferences, etc.

• Safety means more than the protection of goods (property) only, but also protecting people.

• As society becomes more complex, the hazards we face become more complex, e.g.
  – Automobiles,
  – Nuclear accidents
  – Toxic Waste
  – Others???????