

In the Beginning



The Trinidad and Tobago Bureau Standard (TTBS) had established a Technical Committee in 1985 to develop standards for safety equipment and safe practices. That committee recognized the need for national safety programs in raising public awareness for safety procedures and the use of proper safety equipment at work, in the home and in recreation. Therefore a National Safety Week Committee, under the Chairmanship of Dr. Hamid Farabi of the Engineering Faculty, University of the West Indies was set up in collaboration with the TTBS to organize the first National Safety Week from 1985 November 17-23. After successfully staging the National Safety Week 1985, Dr. Farabi convened the inaugural meeting of the National Safety Association on Saturday 1986 January 25. That meeting led to the establishment of the National Safety Council W.I which was inaugurated a few weeks later on 1986 February 19 with a budget of \$20,000, raised from the first National Safety Week of the previous year. At that meeting an Executive Committee comprising the under-mentioned was elected:

Name	Status
Dr. Hamid Faribi	President
Dr. Victor Coombs	Vice-President
Mr. Laurence Solomon	Secretary
Mr. Brian Moore	Treasurer
Mr. Lester Jemmott	Committee Member
Mr. Kenny Roberts	Committee Member
Ms. Shameine Ali	Committee Member

During the first year of operations of the National Safety Council, there were several initiatives including:

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A Radio Program of Safety Talks hosted by Paul Rene.'

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A series of newspaper articles.

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A Seminar on S&H in Collective Bargaining.

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3-Day OSH Course for the Management Development Centre.

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A Laboratory Safety Program at the Central Training Unit.

- A Radio Panel Discussion – Panelists being Dr. A. Wills (Honorary Member), Dr. N. Beckles, Dr. V. Coombs and Dr. H. Faribi.

National Safety Week 1986-1990

Over the period, the National Safety Council coordinated and promoted an annual National Safety Week, which had been initiated in 1985 by Dr. Faribi and his committee.

Alliances – The Early Years

The Council collaborated with the Ministry of Labour in 1987 in the staging of a National Consultation on Safety as well as a three-day Seminar / Workshop in Safety at the JFK Lecture Theatre, UWI.

The Council also formed an alliance with the Cipriani Labour College, when over the period

1988/1989, the Council conducted the first local one year Safety Management Certificate Course. This culminated with the graduation of 52 students on July 15, 1989 in the Conference Room 101, Faculty of Engineering, U.W.I., St. Augustine.

Topics covered included:

- Industrial Safety
- Industrial Relations
- Occupational Health and Industrial Hygiene.
- Communications.
- Behavioral Science and Security Aspect of Safety Management.

Training & Awareness Programs – The Early Years

Over the period 1986-1990, the then National Safety Council conducted or co-hosted several training programs, workshops and conferences. These included:

Year	Program
1986	- S&H in Collective Bargaining
	- National Safety Week
1987	- 2-Day Seminar / National Safety Week
1988	- Safety in the Petroleum Industry
	- Non-Destructive Testing
	- Safety in the Health Care Industry.
	- National Safety Week.
1989	

- National Safety Week

1988/1989

- 1st Certificate Safety Management Course

1989

- WSO HMT 1 Certificate Course
- National Safety Week.

1990

- WSO Hazardous Materials Incident Response
- National Safety Week.

1990

- Developed with NIHERST – Certificate in OSH

1990-1994

After this initial success, the records on hand do not show any significant activities during the 1990-1994 period, until the intervention of a group of 27 concerned Safety Professionals, on Saturday 1994 July 23 at the Cipriani Labour College. That group led by Messrs Laurence Solomon and Patrick Laurence met and signed a petition requesting an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) to re-energize the Council. The EGM was held on Saturday 1994 August 13 when an Executive Committee was elected. Since then the Council has grown from strength to strength.

Members of the Executive Committee of the 1994 Re-Established Council were:

Name	Status
Mr. Laurence Solomon	President
Mr. Lennox Findlay	Vice-President

Mr. Sataish Rampersad	Secretary
Ms. Genevieve Bernard	Assistant Secretary
Mr. Carl Cupid	Treasurer
Mr. Peter West	Public Relations Officer
Mr. Evans Cadogan	Committee Member
Mr. Kenneth Noel	Committee Member
Dr. Joan Bernadine	Committee Member
Mr. Clayton Ahyee	Committee Member

Council wishes to recognize the contributions of successive Executive Committees led initially by Dr. Faribi, followed by Dr. Victor Coombs, Messrs Laurence Solomon, Hanif Mohammed, Kenneth Noel, Lennox Findlay to the current President David St. Clair. Each subsequent executive committee built on the work of the previous one, as the Council continues the pursuit of its mission:

“To Make Safety a Way of Life”.

Council also wishes to recognize its Trustees Dr. Victor Coombs, Dr Roy Thomas and Fellow Patrick Laurence, who were there for the Council in good times as well as in the difficult periods. This has been especially so for Fellow Patrick Laurence.

Some Major Challenges Accommodation

Over the years, the Council operated for the most part without a permanent base. Initially, the TTBS, NIHERST and then Cipriani Labour College accommodated the Council. For the period 1995-1997 when Cipriani Labour College was no longer available, the office of Mr. Ken Wright (Attorney at Law) was the official address and office of the Council. During the years 1997-2005, the Safety Department of the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago provided a temporary home. Then on 2005 June 10 the Council took possession of its Office Module, its own space at Room B303, the Professional Centre, 11-13 Fitzwilliams Drive South (opposite the entrance to the Jean Pierre Complex), Port of Spain. Council is indeed grateful to the many individuals and corporations that had made this acquisition possible. Council salutes the first four Diamond Contributors to the Building Fund and these are:

- Lennox Findlay
- Jamaludeen Hosein
- Kyam Mohammed
- Kenneth Noel

The Council is now a member and shareholder of the Trinidad and Tobago Group of Professional Associations the group that owns and manages the entire office complex. To quote Mr. Leo Martin, former President of TTGPA “the value of membership in the group and participating in an environment enriched by a number of professional disciplines, which is not easily quantified, is nevertheless, significant”.

The sum of \$70,799.00 had been realized in donations towards the Secretariat Building Fund of \$190,000.00.

Incorporation of the Council

In 1999 the Council was incorporated by Act No.28 of 1999 by the Trinidad and Tobago Parliament ([Click here to read the PDF document](#)). It was expedient for the Council to seek official recognition from the Parliament and to gain also the legal status as a body corporate. However, in our meetings with a Joint Select Parliamentary Committee, it was suggested by the members of that committee that our name be changed. By resolution dated 1999 November, the National Safety Council of Trinidad and Tobago became The Safety Council of Trinidad and Tobago to facilitate its incorporation.

Constitutional Reform

Over the years successive Executive Committees have identified the need for amending Council's constitution for more effective governance. This remains a work in progress. In the first year of operation there was the name change from the Safety Council (WI) to the National Safety Council (TT) followed by a change to the Safety Council of Trinidad and Tobago. Then

there was a further change to The Safety Council of Trinidad and Tobago in 1999. A major challenge was the establishment of the South West Chapter and its functional and financial relationships with the parent body. The enthusiasm for safety performance of a major construction company in the energy sector resulted in an upsurge in membership by employees on the job site of that construction company, which could not have been sustained. As the project matured and moved to completion, the focus for membership in that location waned and the Chapter went into inactivity.

Membership

The sensitive issue of classification of members has been discussed several times but without resolution. The Executive sees this as a long term process that must be carefully done to avoid the alienation of members that have been very supportive of the Council and may not fall into the category of member according to the constitution. Council is closer to defining a process to treat with this after the benefits have been clearly defined and will be formalized in the near future.

Participation in General meetings continues to be a source of concern in two areas. Firstly the numbers of persons attending has always been much less than the number of financial members. Secondly the attendees keep changing. New members attend only a few meetings. We have sought to address this by the introduction of an induction session for new members. The objectives of these sessions are to:

- Detail the Vision of the Council
- Explain the operation of the Council
- Preview opportunities for net-working
- Solicit ongoing participation

These sessions take place just prior to Quarterly Meetings and members accepted within the quarter are expected to attend. It is anticipated that this will result in greater participation increasing the critical mass necessary for addressing a wider range of issues.

Finances

Continued increase in membership and revenue is absolutely necessary for growth. Also the cost of operation continues to increase. As such, we have altered the membership dues for corporate members seeking an increase payment relative to the size of their operation. The new dues are categorized as follows:

Definition			
Category	No. of Employees	Annual Turnover	Annual Dues
Micro	1-5	< \$1M	\$200
Small	6-25	\$1M - \$7.5M	\$1500
Medium	26-50	\$7.5M - \$15M	\$2000
Large	>50	>\$15M	\$3000

The dues for individual members is \$200 per year.

Website

The challenges that plagued our website continue. Council is now working with a new web master and it is expected that soon our new web site will be fully functional. We repeat the appeal to all members to provide input for posting and sharing with the general membership. The opportunity exists for promoting the safety initiatives of members.

Service

Organizations continue to seek the services of the Council for assistance for compliance with the requirements of the Occupational Safety and Health Act. There is an increasing clientele

and we continue to satisfy client expectations. The challenge now is to maintain a sufficiently large cadre of trained and competent persons to match the demand. Additionally the Council conducts at least one training program per quarter. On successful completion receive a Council certificate. The programs are usually well attended and are very informative. However in recent times, with the slow down in the economy we have had to work harder to maintain market share. The strategy now is to also target corporations to deliver on-site training at their premises. In this way the training could be customized to the respective workplace and delivered when and where needed.

OSH Legislative Framework

The Council was a persistent advocate for the passage and enactment of an appropriate legislative framework for the protection of the safety and health of those at work and of those that can be affected by work activities. Several of the provisions of old Factories Ordinance Chapter 30 No. 2, which had been enacted in 1950 were no longer appropriate in today's workplace. Since 1997, each year the Council has conducted a number of workshops, training programs, panel discussions on the various versions of the OSH Bill and the subsequently proclaimed Act 2004 and its provisions. The Council had lobbied all the members of Parliament in both the Lower and Upper Houses urging each Parliamentarian to support the OSH Bill of 1999. In 2000 the Council organized a Panel Discussion on the Bill, in which the panelists included persons representing both sides of the House of Representatives; it also included as well an Independent Senator. After passage of the OSH Bill in 2004, the Council had had two of its members on the OSH Advisory Council, which had been established to advise the Government on implementation of the provisions of the Act. The Council is now represented on each sub-committee of the TTBS Specification Committee developing OSH Standards and has "inter alia" worked on the following standards:

- Contractor Safety Management
- Risk Assessment
- Workplace Safety
- Indoor Lighting

- Personal Protective Equipment
- Industrial Helmets
- Gloves for Industrial Use
- Footwear Protection
- Eye and Face Protection

Summary

Since its second coming in 1994 August, the Council has moved from an organization with a net worth of less than \$5,000.00 with no permanent home of its own to one with assets in excess of \$500,000.00 including its office module in the Professional Center. The membership has grown steadily from 27 concerned professionals in 1994 to over 100 individuals and 40 Corporate members. The Council has provided advice to the government on implementation of the OSH Act. Its nomination of Lennox Findlay, then President to sit on the Board of the OSH Authority had been accepted and Lennox was a member of the first OSHA Board to be constituted. Council has placed competent members at the disposal of the TTBS to work on the various sub-committees developing appropriate standards for the Act. More recently its intervention in assisting employers in achieving and sustaining OSH Act compliance is being well received. But there is still so much more that needs to be done, hence the ongoing membership drive to increase the cadre of safety professionals within the membership.

A casual observation of people at work around the country reveals an obvious improvement of awareness for safety and health in the workplace. The prevalence of high visibility vests on roadside and construction site workers can be seen as an indicator that more workers and employers are at least paying some attention to safety. No doubt the Occupation Safety and Health Act 2004 (as amended) has influenced this attitude. The numbers of occupational fatalities have been reducing each year. However, these indicators by no means can be viewed as "mission accomplished". There is still a great deal of work to be done to bring about the type of safety culture throughout the society to generate the confidence that we can rest assured that workers can return to their families safely after every day's work. The Council is proud to have contributed to this transition over the twenty-four years of its existence.

The community expects our organization to significantly advance the progress of safety in general throughout the country. We are fully cognizant of this expectation and will continue to strive to satisfy it, to the extent that our resources allow. The public's expectations of the Council have not changed over the years. We have satisfied those expectations to a very limited extent. The

road ahead is still very long and filled with hurdles. If as professionals in the field of safety we collaborate and retain a common focus, the goal of an appropriate safety culture in all organizations throughout our country can be achieved. We pride ourselves as the only

organization that is solely dedicated to the promotion of all aspects of health, safety and environmental protection in Trinidad and Tobago. We welcome all safety practitioners and all those who wish to make safety a way of life.

For the current two (2) years term ending 2013 the members of the Executive Committee are:

Name	Status
David St. Clair	President
Benjamin De La Rosa	Vice-President
Vanessa Thomas Williams	Secretary
Richard Akong	Assistant Secretary
Kenneth Noel	Treasurer
Marjorie Stephens Smith	Public Relations Officer
Fareed sahibdeen	Committee Member
Veronica Campbelle	Committee Member
Haala Nassir	Committee Member
Michael Viechweg	Committee Member

Council wishes to thank them for their leadership and commitment.

Kenneth Alexander Noel

Head Education Committee

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