

SAFETY SPOTLIGHT

Abby Greer August 12, 2025

The “Safety Spotlight” feature of The Green Light shines the spotlight on safety professionals to gain insight into their background, and their thoughts and ideas on safety in our industry.

Meet Christopher Haney, CDS – Director of H.S.S.E. & HR at Payne Trucking. With almost four decades of leadership experience and a career that spans luxury hospitality management and heavy-haul trucking, Christopher Haney knows that Safety is both a science and an art. As a Director of Safety, HR & Risk Management, he oversees everything from compliance and training to risk management and legal representation – all while keeping a sense of humor and a genuine connection with the people he protects. Whether he’s representing the company in litigation or swapping stories with drivers in the yard, Chris believes Safety isn’t just a policy – it’s a promise.



How did you get started in Safety? What do you view as the main duties of a Safety Director?

My career in Safety was the natural intersection of two worlds – hospitality and trucking. After years in high-profile hotel management, where guest safety and service excellence were non-negotiable, I transitioned into transportation. The stakes were higher, the vehicles bigger, and the regulations... well, let’s just say the FMCSA doesn’t hand out “frequent flyer points.” As a Safety Director, my primary role is to protect lives, property, and the company’s reputation. That means ensuring compliance with DOT, OSHA, PHMSA, and environmental regulations, while also building a safety culture where policies aren’t just rules on paper but part of everyday operations.

What has been the most challenging task in your role/career as a Safety Director?

Changing mindsets. Equipment can be replaced and processes updated, but convincing someone who’s been “doing it this way for 30 years” to see a new perspective? That’s the real heavy haul. The trick is to pair data with stories, and occasionally, a little humor, to make the medicine go down easier.

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How do you promote your company's safety culture? How do you get employees to "buy in" or get involved?

I focus on communication, recognition, and consistency. I make sure Safety isn't just talked about when something goes wrong. We celebrate milestones, recognize drivers and staff who model safe behavior, and keep Safety top-of-mind without turning it into "background noise." The buy-in happens when people see it's not about discipline — it's about protecting our team and their ability to keep earning a living.

What advice do you wish you had received early in your safety career? What advice would you give to someone who is starting out in their safety role?

Advice I wish I had received: You can't change everything at once, no matter how many certifications you earn or how much coffee you drink. Advice I give: Listen first, act second. Safety is as much about relationships as regulations. If people trust your intentions, they'll trust your guidance.

What is your "One Big Thing" you focus on in your safety role?

Creating a culture where Safety is second nature — not a checklist. When Safety is instinctive, it becomes the foundation for every decision, from the driver's seat to the boardroom.

What would be your safety quote or message?

"Safety isn't a rulebook. It's a promise you keep — to yourself, your family, and the person in the vehicle next to you."

Any other information you would like to provide?

I've been fortunate to serve in multiple industry leadership roles, from the American Trucking Association's Safety Management Council to the Virginia and Maryland trucking associations. But at the heart of it, I'm still the guy who will roll up his sleeves, walk the yard, and talk shop with drivers. And if we can swap a good story or two along the way — even better.

