



A STUDY IN SUCCESS

Custom Virtual “Safety Bootcamp” Reinforces Safety Culture

2025 GOLD BRANDON HALL EXCELLENCE AWARD — BEST COMPLIANCE TRAINING

DTE Energy (DTE) is a Detroit-based diversified energy company. Operating units include electric and natural gas companies serving 3.6 million customers across Michigan. Additional business interests include custom energy solutions, renewable energy generation and energy marketing and trading.

SITUATION



DTE

DTE aspires to be the best-operated energy company in North America and a catalyst for community growth while simultaneously making the safety of employees and the public a clear priority.

Although safety is a company-wide shared responsibility, front-line workers and representative safety leaders are key to shaping and reinforcing a strong safety culture.

Even with robust training, field work remains inherently high-risk. It is often performed in emergencies with changing variables and hazardous conditions. Field teams tasked with restoring power quickly and safely in these difficult and demanding environments require strong safety leadership training.

Despite a historically strong safety performance, DTE identified a troubling trend: while overall injury rates declined, the rate of serious injuries plateaued. This spurred DTE to review its safety model and processes.



SOLUTION

DTE partnered with Innovative Learning Group (ILG) to develop a customized, virtual, instructor-led workshop designed to strengthen key safety programs, reinforce DTE's safety culture, and emphasize the critical role of front-line leaders in driving safety.

More than a training session, the workshop was intentionally designed to challenge existing mindsets and shift the way field leaders and their teams approach safety by introducing a new safety model based on best-in-class industrial safety research and industry-leading practices.

The workshop blends lecture, video, and practice activities and culminates in a capstone module that ties all content together and equips participants to lead safety efforts within their teams.

The Need for Change

After benchmarking industry leaders and conducting internal safety assessments, the research findings identified four critical areas of focus:

- Plan for safety failures so safeguards can be practiced and implemented
- Prioritize recognition of high-energy hazards that can kill employees
- Empower employees to identify and control high-energy hazards or stop unsafe work when necessary
- Help leaders deliver safety messages that demonstrate care and concern versus just work completion

In response to the assessments, DTE adopted Dr. Matthew Hallowell's STKY (Stuff That Can Kill You) framework to identify and control high-energy hazards. This model seamlessly integrated with DTE's existing Human Performance (HP) tools like Pre-Job Briefs and Safe Worker Observations, forming the foundation of the workshop.

Workshop Design and Delivery

The workshop is delivered in three half-day virtual sessions as part of DTE's field leader curriculum. It allows learners to explore the thinking behind the model through interactive discussions, collaborative exercises, and DTE-specific work scenarios.

Throughout the workshop, best practices are reinforced to ensure that front-line leaders not only understand the safety model but also apply it effectively — making safety leadership a core part of everyday responsibilities.



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Day One – Thinking Safety and Leading

Participants explore leadership, coaching, and high-energy safety concepts foundational to DTE Service Excellence. DTE communication videos and Dr. Hallowell’s research video introduce and then reinforce the safety model, while covering HP principles and tools for employee engagement and continuous safety improvement.

Day Two – Practicing Safety and Leading

Field leaders apply hazard recognition and control methods using DTE processes and tools. They practice STKY methodology with DTE-specific videos illustrating real-world hazards and leadership best practices for safety communication.

Day Three – Integrating Safety and Leading

Leaders practice with DTE-specific tools and videos, focusing on team implementation of the safety model. They identify key actions and resources needed, review safety model animation for employee communication, and discuss leadership strategies that build trust and reinforce safety culture.

Format

Each session blends lectures, videos, interactive discussions, and application exercises. Additionally, an editable PDF participant guide allows field leaders to record their thoughts and customize the content. The guide also includes embedded links to the DTE’s Corporate Safety SharePoint site to help field leaders quickly locate resources.

Slides use animations for learner engagement and reinforce key points. Cued questions for facilitators and embedded videos enable seamless content delivery.

Each module was designed with activities and supporting debriefs, ensuring field leaders have time to practice and apply the learning. These activities and debriefs provide a standardized way for facilitators to cue the instructions and debrief questions, as well as reinforce correct answers.

Polling questions and chats help facilitators immediately engage with the field leaders and/or review key learning from the previous session.

Rollout

All new field leaders must complete “Safety Bootcamp” (SBC) within their first year. Participation is tracked by the Executive Safety Committee and ensures leaders and teams recognize and control high-energy hazards and feel empowered to stop unsafe work.



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RESULTS

Level one feedback remains positive, with most scores in the highest satisfaction ranges (either a five, “highly valued/strongly agree” or a four, “valued/agree”).

Primary facilitators report that field leaders, who previously dreaded the original three-day in-person format, were amazed by how engaging and informative the virtual SBC training turned out to be.

Despite the challenges since the rollout of this training — including major storms and tornadoes — DTE is proud to hold a top-six-percent ranking in employee engagement, driven by the Safety Energy Model and the integration of Pre-Job Briefings targeting high-energy hazards. This progress is a direct result of the Safety Bootcamp and leadership commitment.

To learn more about how Innovative Learning Group can create custom learning solutions to help improve business results, contact us at info@innovativeLG.com.

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