

LINDA TAPP

Incoming 2025-26 ASSP President

Linda Tapp is set to make history when she becomes ASSP president on July 1, 2025. She will be the second of three consecutive women in the role, representing a first in the Society's 114-year history. Following Pam Walaski and preceding Monique Parker, Tapp will also be the 10th woman to lead ASSP, marking a significant milestone for the organization.

Tapp's journey began in a working-class neighborhood in Philadelphia, PA. "I grew up around the public service side of things," she reflects. Raised in a row house in a blue-collar community, Tapp was immersed in an environment where hard work and public service were part of daily life—her father was a police officer and her mother worked at a local soft pretzel bakery, a regional favorite. "You can't get much more Philly than that," Tapp laughs. Her grandfather, a firefighter and later president of the Philadelphia Second Alarmers Association—an all-volunteer association servicing the city's emergency services—also played an influential role in her upbringing, with the sounds of fire radios and trips to fire musters (a form of competition among fire departments) filling her childhood. With a family history rooted in service, Tapp's path to safety seems a natural evolution.

Her journey continued with a pivotal educational experience at the Philadelphia High School for Girls, the only all-girls public high school in the state at the time. Tapp says that institution provided her with an empowering environment where she could thrive alongside a diverse group of women from all parts of Philadelphia. "It was life-changing," she notes, acknowledging the significant impact the experience had on her personal and professional growth.

After high school, she headed to Drexel University, where she initially pursued a degree in electrical engineering despite wondering if it was her true calling. "I had no idea what I wanted to major in," Tapp says. She later switched to biology. With its 1:6 male-to-female ratio at the time, the university presented its own set of challenges. The experience was markedly different from the environment of an all-girls high school, but it helped Tapp find balance and community in an unexpected place: her sorority, Delta Zeta.

During her time at Drexel, she became immersed in sorority life, even serving as chapter president. That role presented her with the opportunity to attend a leadership conference, an experience that not only strengthened her leadership skills at a young age but also ignited a lifelong passion for professional growth. It was also during this time that she met her husband, Darren, who held a similar leadership role as president of the Pi Kappa Phi fraternity.

Service Beyond the Classroom

In addition to attending class, she worked tirelessly to pay for her education. As a first-generation college student, Tapp knew the value of hard work and independence. "I worked at least two, sometimes three jobs at a time," she recalls. These jobs, including a stint as a medical test subject, helped fund her education. The university's co-op program, which alternates between work and study periods, proved to be a game-changer for Tapp, covering a significant portion of her tuition.

Her job as a medical test subject, although unusual, shows how far she was willing to go to make ends meet. "I'd go to the lab, they'd rub some cream on my arm, and I'd come back a week later to see if I developed a rash. But it was \$50," she laughs. She says these early experiences of juggling many responsibilities and challenges shaped her resilience and determination.

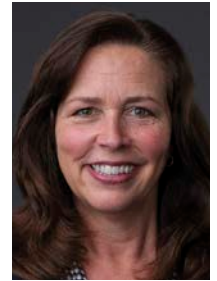
Unexpected Career Start

During her senior year at Drexel, a job posting for an insurance company seeking science and engineering majors caught Tapp's attention. With only minimal understanding of what the job entailed, she applied and became the sixth (and only female) employee of an asbestos abatement insurance company, Fidelity Environmental Insurance Co., based in Princeton, NJ. At age 23, Tapp entered the world of loss control, where she visited construction sites to ensure safety compliance.

For Tapp, it was more than the new professional challenges that made this job memorable; it was also the unique circumstances. "I would have to wear a bathing suit under my business suit to go through shower systems at asbestos abatement jobsites filled with construction workers," she says. "Obviously, I didn't want to do that too long." Tapp recalls the experience as an interesting introduction to the world of safety.

This job also introduced Tapp to industrial hygiene. While attending an asbestos abatement course at Temple University, her instructor encouraged her to join a new master's program in industrial hygiene, later renamed "environmental health." The program introduced her to a new world.

The courses were a revelation. "That was the first time I had a true industrial safety class," she says.



Linda Tapp
Linda M. Tapp, CSP, ALCM, CPTD, is president of SafetyFUNDamentals, an occupational safety training and consulting firm. Tapp served on the ASSP Board of Directors as vice president of finance from 2020-23. She has more than 30 years of occupational safety and health experience. Tapp was ASSP's Safety Professional of the Year in 2007 and earned the Charles V. Culbertson Outstanding Volunteer Service Award in 2010. She served two terms as chair of the ASSP Foundation and received BCSP's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2022. She frequently presents at conferences across the country. Tapp holds an M.S. in Environmental Health from Temple University and a B.S. in Biology from Drexel University.



“I had ventilation classes and all these things that were brand new.” The combination of technical work and the human aspect of safety appealed to Tapp. She says the balance allowed her to use both her technical and people skills to solve real-world problems. “I really liked going out and seeing how things are made and trying to solve problems,” she says. For Tapp, safety and industrial hygiene felt like a perfect fit.

ASSP Involvement

In 1989, at her employer’s recommendation, Tapp joined ASSP (then ASSE) and attended her first meeting with the Penn-Jersey Chapter. “People were so nice and welcoming,” Tapp says of that first meeting. And, as with many volunteer-run organizations, “You leave your first meeting with a job,” she laughs. Tapp was quickly recruited—by the end of the meeting, she was the chapter’s newsletter editor.

Over time, she became actively involved with the chapter, which she describes as a small but tight-knit group. “You know everybody,” she says. “People cycle through the offices, but I really liked it.” Even today, Tapp continues to stay involved at the chapter level. Now a member of the New Jersey Chapter, she brought her son to a recent chapter meeting. “It’s just such a welcoming community,” she says.

Growth as a Safety Leader

After 3 years at her first job, Tapp transitioned into manufacturing safety. This opened new doors, and soon she found herself at Elkins-Sinn (later Wyeth), where her safety expertise continued to develop. As her professional experience expanded, she began to understand how important networking and mentorship were to shaping a career.

One fortuitous networking event at the Society’s 1994 annual conference in Las Vegas, NV, changed the course of her career. There, she met Tom Cecich (2016-17 ASSP president), who was a global vice president of environmental, health and safety at GlaxoSmithKline (GSK plc) at the time. They bonded over their mutual roots in Cherry Hill, NJ, and a shared appreciation for a particular cheesecake from Olga’s, a local diner. When Tapp explained that she and her family were relocating to London, Cecich encouraged her to send him her résumé, which she did—along with a cheesecake from Olga’s. An extraordinary turn of events followed: She was eventually offered a consulting opportunity from GSK plc’s plants in the U.K., kickstarting her consulting career. “He must have liked the cheesecake,” she laughs, reflecting on the serendipity of the situation. “That connection did a lot to launch my consulting career.”

Tapp credits her career shift to early encouragement, particularly a pivotal conversation with then-Society president Bill Phillips at ASSP’s annual conference in 1992. Phillips took an interest in her aspirations, asking about her goals and interests before advising her to consider consulting. That discussion, she explains, planted the seed for her career transition, ensuring she was prepared when the right opportunity emerged.

Transition to Consulting

When Tapp returned to the U.S. in 1996, now expecting her first child, she went back to work at Wyeth, but quickly realized she missed the variety and opportunity for innovation that consulting offered. “I liked the freedom and the creativity of being a consultant,” she says. “And I needed the flexibility with starting a family as well.”

In 1998, she officially started her own consulting business, Crown Safety, a nod to her time in the U.K. During the early years, she provided a broad range of services covering issues ranging from excavation work to on-site contractor support. As time passed, her focus shifted. “About 20 years later, I leaned more toward safety training, which is what I focus on now,” she says, explaining how this change led her to focus on content creation and helping other safety professionals improve their training and communication skills. “I enjoy that a whole lot more than climbing under machines and up the sides of buildings!”

Life Abroad & Family

Tapp’s time abroad played a crucial role in her personal and professional life. After London, her husband’s job took them back to Europe, first to Munich, then to Amsterdam. By the time they moved to Munich, they were a family of five. Tapp says the experience of living abroad with children was transformative, allowing them all to see the world in a new way.

Today, Tapp’s children are pursuing diverse careers. Her oldest, Devon (28), is director of health outreach, promotion, education, and services at Stockton University and is concurrently completing a doctorate in health science with an emphasis on population health at Thomas Jefferson University. Gillian (26) is a certified public accountant and works in advisory for PwC in New York City. Christian (24) is pursuing a career in biotechnology while working toward a Master of Business and Science degree, specializing in drug discovery and development, at Rutgers University.

Adventures & Pushing Boundaries

Outside of work, Tapp enjoys spending time outdoors. “If it’s above 50 °F, I’m usually working outside,” she says. Tapp says New Jersey’s 130 miles of shoreline offer easy access to both the beach and the mountains, making it a great place for outdoor activities. “It’s a lot greener than most people think,” she says. One favorite hobby is hiking, and she’s particularly fond of hiking trips to places like Canada and the Swiss Alps, where she has an upcoming trip planned. However, Tapp is quick to clarify that she’s not into camping. “I need a hotel,” she jokes.

In recent years, Tapp has developed a passion for pickleball. She enjoys the sport for its accessibility to people of all ages and skill levels. “I play with 30-year-olds and 80-year-olds. Anybody can play,” she says. Tapp says she is considering becoming an instructor to help beginners get started. “It’s about getting people off the couch and understanding how easy it is to play the sport and be active,” she says.

One defining aspect of Tapp’s life and career has been her willingness to step outside her comfort zone.



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From top: The Tapp family—Darren, Devon, Christian, Linda and Gillian. Friends and fellow members Laynnea Myles, Tapp, Monique Parker and Sondra Lavoie.

Tapp says that every year since turning 50, she challenges herself to try 50 new things. This goal was not about big “bucket list” activities; rather, it was about seeking new experiences—some big, some small, but all unfamiliar. “Every year, I try to do more things. I don’t always get to 50, but I try to line up things I haven’t done before,” Tapp explains. “One year, I improved my culinary knife skills. Another year, I tried pottery. I also spent time visiting different places of worship, from synagogues to Buddhist temples.”

But not everything resulted in a new hobby. “Some things I tried just weren’t for me. Knitting? No. Golf? No—too slow,” she says. A new activity on the horizon is learning how to care for a bonsai tree, which she plans to do with her son.

When asked what she has learned from these adventures, Tapp shares some insightful advice: “It’s about keeping your eyes open for opportunities and saying yes,” she says. “A while ago, I read Shonda Rhimes’s book *The Year of Yes*, and it’s basically about getting out of your comfort zone.”

She embraced this mindset when, while attending an ASSP Women in Safety Excellence Common Interest Group networking event, fellow member Isabel Bravo asked her to copresent in Spanish at a professional development conference. Although the idea intimidated her (she had not practiced the language since school), Tapp agreed and spent a year meticulously preparing. But just 10 minutes into the presentation, a fire alarm went off in the convention center, forcing everyone outside for most of the hour. When they returned, only a short time remained, and they had to rush through the rest of the presentation. Tapp admits feeling a mix of relief and disappointment but reflects on the experience as a valuable challenge and growth opportunity.

This mentality of embracing the unknown has also informed her leadership style. “I’m definitely not one to jump in and dominate the conversation, but I make sure I’m extremely well-prepared,” she says. “I think that’s what makes the difference.”

Her approach to leadership was shaped in part by her time serving as a trustee of the ASSP Foundation, which she also served as chair for two terms. From there, her involvement with ASSP deepened, eventually leading her to run for an elected office. Tapp says that when serving as vice president of finance, she truly began to see herself as a potential leader.

Despite her many career and volunteer accomplishments, Tapp remains grounded, embracing challenges, stepping out of her comfort zone and continuing to grow professionally and personally. Tapp says this approach has allowed her to thrive in her career while remaining connected to her passions.

Professional Development & Writing

A consistent theme during Tapp’s career journey is the importance of professional development. In particular, she sees writing as a tool for career advancement. “I believe safety professionals should strive to write and speak at conferences more,” she says. “It’s important to share our knowledge and what we’ve learned to help other professionals now and in the future.”



While serving as editor of her most recent book, she put that advice into practice by encouraging 16 women to contribute chapters. For Tapp, her work as an editor is about building confidence. “It’s not just the result that matters. It’s the process of getting someone to believe in their ability to write and share their expertise with the world.”

Her commitment to helping others grow is further reflected in her recent initiative: the Safety Writers Accountability Group. The community started with 10 people, each of whom has a goal to write something, whether an article or a book. “I’ll keep encouraging them to get their content written and get it out there,” Tapp says.

Helping Safety Professionals

Tapp sees effective safety training and communication as a key factor in helping safety professionals establish themselves as trusted advisors within their organizations. She believes that when safety professionals deliver engaging, evidence-based training, they enhance their credibility and influence, making safety an integral part of business operations rather than just a compliance requirement.

“If they don’t remember it, they’re not going to use it on the job,” she says, emphasizing the importance of interactive, research-based learning techniques. Through her consulting work, Tapp helps safety professionals refine their approach, equipping them with the tools to communicate more effectively, gain leadership buy-in and drive meaningful change in workplace culture.

Call to Leadership

Tapp’s leadership journey has been shaped by hard work, unexpected opportunities and influential mentors. As she steps into the role of ASSP president, she remains committed to giving back to the community that helped shape her career. Her path—from a young girl in Philadelphia to a global safety leader—highlights the power of service, community and mentorship in building a successful career. As she begins her leadership at ASSP, Tapp is ready to inspire and empower safety professionals to make a meaningful impact in their organizations and communities. **PSJ**

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