

SAFETY SUMMIT***Presented by the AZA Safety Committee***

Saturday, March 21-Monday, March 23

Salon West, 2nd Floor**Saturday, March 21 - Day 1****8:00 am - 12:00 pm****Safety Around Aquatics Workshop**

A half-day deep dive into aquatic safety, compliance, and technology for zoo and aquarium professionals. Uncover best practices, emerging technologies, and inclusive approaches to ensure your institution's dive program is safe, compliant, and future-ready. Join us to prioritize guest and staff safety, delve into dive safety, and gain practical insights from lessons learned. Join us to elevate safety in aquatics!

- **My AZA Remedy**

This session presents a practical, people-focused approach to building a safe and sustainable dive program, informed by the speaker's progression from zookeeper to Diving Safety Officer. Tailored for institutions with limited time and training resources, the talk introduces an "AZA Remedy" for making required drills effective, efficient, and positively received. By reframing drills as short, low-pressure workshops, integrating rescue skills into existing training, and breaking complex scenarios into manageable, repeatable components, dive teams can train both new and experienced divers while respecting animal care priorities and operational schedules. The presentation highlights strategies for collaborating with zoological leadership, strengthening safety culture, and ensuring AZA-required drills become the natural culmination of ongoing practices—resulting in better preparedness, safer operations, and a confident, engaged dive team.

- **The Default Patient Problem: Anatomy, Bias, and CPR Training**

Many cardiac arrest response protocols rely on a "default" patient model that does not reflect the anatomical diversity encountered in real-world emergency settings. CPR training mannequins are predominantly modeled on flat-chested bodies, offering limited guidance for responders treating patients with breasts and contributing to hesitation, reduced confidence, and delayed care. This session examines a multi-year, occupational safety-focused initiative exploring how CPR education, training standards, and equipment design affect responder performance. It highlights how inclusive CPR training supports risk mitigation, workforce preparedness, and more consistent, equitable delivery of lifesaving care.

- **Exhibit Access Hazard: Designing Aquatic Exhibits with Divers in Mind**

Aquarium exhibits are designed to balance guest experience, animal welfare, habitat aesthetics, and life-support system performance. In that process, access for routine and emergency work inside exhibits—particularly underwater—can be unintentionally overlooked, even though these activities are essential to long-term exhibit functionality, safe operations, and asset protection. This session examines challenges related to diver ingress and egress, and why incorporating access needs during early planning and design is critical. Drawing on real-world examples, it highlights practical post-construction safety solutions—including the Rescue-X Board system, custom ladders, and purpose-built stairs—while emphasizing how diver-informed design reduces risk, limits costly retrofits, and supports safer, more resilient exhibits over their operational lifespan.

- **Interpreting AZA Accreditation Standards for Aquatic Operations**

This session explores how AZA accreditation standards for diving, snorkeling, and emergency drills function in practice across accredited institutions. Using real operational examples, the presentation examines how these standards are interpreted, implemented, and evaluated during accreditation. Attendees will gain insight into recurring compliance challenges, effective institutional approaches, and practical strategies for aligning daily operations, training programs, and emergency preparedness with AZA expectations—while supporting defensible safety systems and organizational risk reduction.

- **Solving a 50-Year Problem: How California Regulated Zoo & Aquarium Exhibit Diving**

For decades, zoo and aquarium exhibit diving existed in a regulatory gray area—high-consequence work performed for science, education, and animal care, yet governed by occupational diving rules written for construction and industrial settings. That gap is now closed. This session explains how California's new regulations finally define and codify zoo and aquarium exhibit diving, moving the field from ambiguity to a clear, defensible standard that better reflects how exhibit diving is performed. The presentation also looks beyond California, exploring why these rules matter nationally. Because the standards have been recognized by OSHA as At Least As Effective (ALAE), they may provide a credible framework that institutions in other states can reference when developing or modernizing exhibit diving Programs.

1:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Safety Starts with You Workshop: Trauma-Informed Care

Panelists and speakers will explore how a trauma-informed approach can strengthen the way we support our people, teams, and the guests we serve. Attendees will learn practical strategies for recognizing stress response and promoting resilience in high-risk, emotionally taxing environments, as well as continue conversations around psychological safety. Through diverse sessions and collaborative roundtable discussions, we'll examine how compassion-centered approaches can enhance both safety culture and organizational-wellbeing, empowering all staff to build healthier, more connected teams that are prepared to thrive all the time.

- **Trauma-Informed Strategies for De-Escalation**
When emotions are high, your ability to stay grounded can change everything. Discover how trauma-informed de-escalation tools can defuse tension and foster trust in the moment—and beyond.
- **Creating Safer Workplaces**
The Critical Role of Mental Health First Aid at your Organization- Everyone deserves to feel seen, supported, and safe at work. Learn how Mental Health First Aid training strengthens your organization's ability to prevent crises and foster a culture of care.
- **Safety Beyond the Scenario**
Trauma-Informed Emergency Preparedness- Learn about a practical tool that organizations can implement to strengthen safety, preparedness, and resilience during emergency preparedness drills and real-world response
- **Moderated Panel Discussion on Trauma Informed Care and Total Worker Health**
Featuring Mental Health Safety Committee Members and Liaisons- Join us as we invite our speakers from the afternoon, as well as others, to the stage for a moderated discussion on how their organizations show up to support their staff in different ways. Ask questions, spark inspiration, and share ideas!
- **Rotating Roundtable Discussion**

Sunday, March 22 – Day 2

8:00 am – 12:00 pm

Safety Culture: Building a working culture that promotes safety

Join us as experts from across our profession discuss vital aspects of workplace safety in zoos and aquariums through discussions centered around building a safety culture. Hear from our Keynote Speakers about the lessons learned from 10 years of the Two-Key/Two-Lock system, hear about how to adapt to the changing climate in your region, and participate in a group workshop building contingency plans.

- **Safety Isn't the Absence of Incidents: Building a Culture of Readiness**
In zoos and aquariums, quiet days can hide risk. True safety comes from readiness—the systems, decisions, and culture that protect us when the unexpected happens. This session reframes safety through practical tools: realistic drills, near-miss learning, ICS role clarity, high-risk scenario planning, and readiness metrics that move organizations beyond luck. Participants will learn how to design meaningful drills, strengthen speak-up culture, sharpen early-event decision-making, and embed readiness into everyday operations.
- **10 Years of Engineering Change to Save Lives**
This year's Safety Summit marks the 10-year anniversary of the creation of our Two-key/Two-lock system — a milestone that represents far more than a protocol. Join Dave Ruhl and Erin McNally for a reflection on the Two Key/Two Lock journey and how the conversation has evolved into the mindset that "Human Safety IS Animal Safety". While we will look back on the implementation of the system throughout our profession, we also look ahead. What does the next decade of safety leadership look like? How do we continue strengthening our systems, supporting our people, and raising the bar? As we gather for this year's summit, we celebrate not just the system itself, but the impact it represents. Let us remember the human and animals lives lost and to take a moment to think about the many lives that have been saved. Making systems safer requires an environment of continual growth, shared accountability and dedication for all involved in the care of the humans and animals.
- **From Risk to Resilience: Practical Tools That Work**
An overview of proactive safety strategies and ergonomic tools designed to reduce physical strain, help prevent workplace accidents, and lessen the severity of injuries when they do occur. We'll explore how hazard identification and safety practices work together with ergonomically designed equipment to create a safer and healthier Oregon Zoo.
- **Identifying Organizational Climate Risks**
Proactive identification of likely climate-related risks can assist organizations in preparing for weather events and mitigating operational impacts. In this session we'll outline the process for organizational climate assessments, review successful case studies, and highlight tools attendees can use with their home institutions to identify and plan for climate concerns.
- **Contingency Planning Workshop**
Join the safety committee while we set up the room into regional tables where organizations that share the same region can meet and brainstorm contingency planning for your organization. Make connections in your region that can

blossom into action plan partnerships when emergencies affect your operation and hear from your neighbors on how they handle emergencies.

1:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Safety Culture: Building a working culture that promotes safety

Join us as we continue discussing workplace safety culture. Hear from experts who have built strong relationships with their local OSHA and Compensation Agencies, Hear about the importance of building a strong Chemical Hygiene Program, participate in a group workshop where the you'll be given the tools to perform a Job Hazard Analysis, Hear about how to prevent compassion fatigue and finish with a discussion lead by the Escapes and Exposures committee

- **Working with OSHA and Compensation Agencies**

Hear how different organizations are working with OSHA and Compensation Agencies to strengthen their safety program while forging a relationship that helps keep you compliant. Talk about how the relationships fostered during Mock Inspections and ongoing safety conversations help when emergencies require real inspections

- **Chemical Hygiene at Georgia Aquarium**

There are many aspects to Chemical Hygiene Safety at an institution with 13 M Gallons of water, over 200 species of animals as well as the safety of both guests and staff. We plan to share information and stories about the chemicals themselves (selection, storage, labeling, waste), testing of chemicals in air, SDS databases, OSHA training, spill plans, contingency plans, disinfection, testing of medications in water, PPE, and how our staff is trained. We will be transparent in sharing stories about our challenges that we hope will help other institutions

- **Job Hazard Analysis (JHA/JSA) Workshop**

Tables will be given examples of tasks to review like you were performing a JHA. Safety Committee members will be around to help answer any questions or guide you through the processes. Learn how simple and quick a JHA can be, and how easy it is to implement them into your safety program by training staff on the process.

- **A Dual-Signal Safety Approach to Compassion Fatigue: Using Data to Detect and Prevent Compassion Fatigue in High-Risk Zoo & Aquarium Roles**

Compassion fatigue is an often-overlooked safety risk in zoo, aquarium, and wildlife-care roles, directly affecting judgment, retention, and incident likelihood. This presentation introduces a data-informed framework for recognizing early warning signs of compassion fatigue and integrating staff wellbeing indicators into safety and incident-tracking systems—helping organizations protect both people and animals

- **Firearms Team Vetting**

Group discussion surrounding how facilities are vetting members of their firearms teams. Discussion topics to include current protocols, filtering agents, use of external agencies, mental health pre- and post-incident, and challenges or limitations

Monday, March 23 – Day 3

8:00 am – 12:00 pm

Security Workshop: A conscious effort in keeping staff, animals and guests safe through vigilance

All institutions have their own ways to keep their facilities safe from outside and inside forces. Hear from experts from several institutions on the different ways they protect their institutions from threats. You'll hear about de-escalations techniques, participate in a Stop-The-Bleed Train the trainer workshop and hear about how AI is affecting our world

- **De-escalation techniques from verbal to physical**

This presentation will cover verbal de-escalation and physical restraint training and techniques for your facility.

- **Preparedness for a Trauma Event**

Discussing the need to train staff for life threatening bleed events in zoological settings (Stop the Bleed®). Learn why this is crucial training for staff to undergo and how institutions can integrate trauma preparedness into their safety programs.

- **Teaching “Stop the Bleed” at Your Zoo: A Practical Demonstration from Hogle Zoo**

Hogle Zoo's Safety and EMS Department has developed a practical, zoo-adapted approach for teaching Stop the Bleed that equips staff to respond confidently to bleeding emergencies, regardless of budget or department size. This session will demonstrate how the program is delivered at Hogle Zoo, highlighting instructor preparation, training flow, equipment setup, and how skills are reinforced through realistic, zoo-specific scenarios. Designed as a “teach the teacher” format, this presentation provides attendees with a clear blueprint for implementing their own program using either minimal-cost resources or enhanced training tools. Participants will learn how to source or improvise training materials, integrate Stop the Bleed instruction into existing safety frameworks, and build cross-department buy-in. By the end of the session, attendees will have the knowledge and adaptable strategies needed to launch an effective bleeding-control training program tailored to their zoo's unique operational environment.

- **A New Risk for Your Safety Culture: AI-Generated Animal Content and What to Do About It**

AI-generated wildlife videos are flooding social media, and your visitors are watching them before they ever walk through your gates. Bears on trampolines. Gorillas smashing glass. Wild predators behave like pets. These videos are

creating dangerous expectations about animal behavior, and most facilities aren't prepared for what comes next. This is the digital world creating real-world consequences in your facility. What happens when a fake video of your facility goes viral while you're actively managing a real incident? What happens when fabricated footage of animal abuse starts circulating, and the press and donors start calling? This session looks at the problem from both a digital risk and physical safety perspective, and it's one your whole team needs to hear. We'll walk through how to update your existing safety and security plans, how to turn chaos into a teachable moment for your patrons, and leave you with practical guidance you can bring back to your facility.

- **Protecting People and strengthening Security in Zoos and Aquariums**

Zoos and aquariums welcome millions of guests each year, including families, children, and diverse staff teams operating within expansive, open, and highly public environments. While these institutions place strong emphasis on animal welfare, guest experience, and operational safety, the scale and accessibility of their campuses create unique vulnerabilities to human-centered threats, including violent crime, child abduction, sexual assault, stalking, targeted violence, and workplace harassment. While resources available to zoo industry participants offer valuable guidance for many safety and emergency preparedness considerations, a significant gap remains in addressing intentional acts of violence. Threats such as homicide, kidnapping, sexual exploitation, stalking, domestic violence spillover, and workplace violence require a multidisciplinary, trauma-informed approach that extends beyond traditional emergency response models.

1:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Security Workshop: A conscious effort in keeping staff, animals and guests safe through vigilance

Join us as we continue to discuss security and keeping institutions safe. Hear how one institution utilizes K9s in their security program, listen to a discussion on how to identify threats at your facility and how to implement assessment techniques, learn about proactive approaches to prevent barrier violations and hear about how one institution works alongside their law enforcement. We will finish discussions with a panel of firearm experts.

- **Utilizing canine teams at your institution**

This presentation will cover the considerations and benefits of contracting K9 teams at your facility to enhance physical security.

- **Threat Identification and Assessment**

This presentation aims to help safety professionals identify suspicious and threatening behaviors using three benchmarks employed by intelligence agencies. By assessing your institution's vulnerabilities and recognizing potential risks along with suspicious activities, you can significantly reduce the likelihood of extremist and assailant attacks against your organization. This proactive approach fosters a safer and more inclusive environment for everyone involved in the mission of all institutions.

- **Securing Spaces: Preventing and Deterring Barrier Violations**

This presentation highlights proactive approaches zoos and aquariums can use to prevent barrier violations while maintaining an inviting guest environment. It emphasizes key statistics alongside practical security practices and barrier designs that safeguard animals, staff, and guests.

- **How not to Train Your Dragon**

Hear about the attack on a keeper by an adult male Komodo Dragon, and the resulting injuries and treatment. Learn about the zoo's Komodo protocols prior to the incident and what was changed afterwards and the safety practices around this species. This experience will be shared in hopes of opening discussion regarding Komodo husbandry practices among U.S. zoos.

- **Coordination with Law Enforcement**

As part of continual improvement efforts to enhance emergency preparedness, Naples Zoo partnered with the Collier County Sheriff's Office and Critical Response Group. By developing shared, site-specific response graphics aligned with local law enforcement systems, this collaboration strengthens communication, coordination, and response effectiveness for emergencies at the Zoo.

- **Firearms Panel Discussion**

Join the committee as we hear from firearm experts across different organizations and industries on topics of safety, procedures and training. You will be able to ask questions and engage in a thoughtful discussion about firearms