

March 4–10, 2026 | 55th National Safety Week

Theme: “Engage, Educate & Empower People to Enhance Safety”

An *Open Letter* to EHS Leaders & Manufacturing CXOs Across India

Dear Leaders,

Every year, as National Safety Week arrives, we exchange pledges, display posters, conduct drills – and then, quietly, return to business as usual. This year, we refuse to do that.

Because the data demands more than ritual.

On average, 3 workers are killed every single day in India’s registered factories alone. That number does not include the unregistered. It does not count the injured. And it does not account for the thousands who go home carrying invisible wounds – chemical exposure, ergonomic damage, psychological trauma from near-misses no one recorded.

These are not acts of fate. They are consequences of a knowledge gap that our industry has tolerated for far too long.

I. THE WAKE-UP CALL: WE HAVE STOPPED TEACHING THE SCIENCE

The 2026 National Safety Week theme – Engage, Educate & Empower – places ‘Educate’ at the very centre. And yet, we must be honest with ourselves about what education has come to mean in our factories.

It has largely come to mean induction checklists, annual refreshers, and laminated SOPs on walls no one reads. It has stopped meaning what it was always supposed to mean:

- Understanding the physics of why a confined space becomes fatal within minutes of oxygen depletion.
- Grasping the chemistry behind why two ‘harmless’ chemicals, stored in adjacent containers, create a toxic reaction.
- Knowing the engineering tolerances that separate safe machine operation from catastrophic failure.
- Recognising the biomechanical limits of the human body under sustained repetitive stress.

This is Core Science. This is Core Engineering. And in most manufacturing organisations today, this foundational knowledge is absent from the shop floor – absent from the EHS team itself, in too many cases.

We have trained people what to do. We have not taught them why it matters. And when people don’t understand the why, they cut corners the moment a supervisor turns away.

II. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE CANNOT FIX A FOUNDATION THAT DOES NOT EXIST

There is enormous enthusiasm in our industry right now about Artificial Intelligence in safety – predictive risk engines, AI-powered HIRA, computer vision for unsafe act detection, digital permit systems. At Sparrow, we build these tools. We believe in them deeply.

But we also see what happens when AI is deployed into an organisation where the fundamentals are missing.

An AI that flags a 'high risk' activity means nothing if the supervisor overriding it does not understand what makes that activity high risk in the first place. Automation amplifies human capability – it cannot replace human understanding.

We are seeing organisations invest in digital safety platforms while their EHS officers cannot explain the Hierarchy of Controls beyond the acronym. We are seeing factories deploy IoT sensors for gas detection while their workers do not know the physiological mechanisms of asphyxiation. The technology sits on top of a hollow foundation.

This is the crisis. And it is urgent.

III. THE THREE-LAYER EDUCATION IMPERATIVE

We are calling on every EHS leader and manufacturing CXO to commit – this National Safety Week – to rebuilding safety education on three foundations:

Layer 1: Core Science Literacy

Every worker on the shop floor should understand the scientific principles behind the hazards they face daily – not at a PhD level, but at a level that creates genuine comprehension. Fire behaviour, chemical reactivity, pressure dynamics, toxicology. These are not advanced' topics. They are survival knowledge. Make them part of onboarding. Make them part of every toolbox talk. Display them not as rules, but as explanations.

Layer 2: Core Engineering Comprehension

Your EHS function must be fluent in the engineering of your operations – not at the level of design engineers, but enough to understand failure modes, load capacities, equipment interdependencies, and the real-world consequences of deviation from design parameters. If your EHS team cannot read a P&ID or interpret a safety relief valve rating, that is an immediate gap to address. Safety that does not understand the machine it is protecting is not safety – it is paperwork.

Layer 3: AI Literacy — Understanding the Tool, Not Just Using It

As AI-driven platforms become standard in industrial safety, your workforce — including leadership — must understand what these systems do and do not do. AI identifies patterns from historical data. It cannot substitute for a risk assessment conducted by someone who understands the process. AI flags anomalies. It cannot make judgement calls without a human who understands context. AI automates permit workflows. It cannot ensure that the person accepting a permit actually comprehends the hazard. AI literacy is not about learning to code. It is about knowing when to trust the machine and when to question it. That requires humans with deep foundational knowledge — which brings us back to Layers 1 and 2.

IV. WHAT SPARROW RMS IS CALLING FOR — RIGHT NOW

This National Safety Week, we make a specific, actionable ask of every leader reading this letter:

- 01 › Audit your EHS education content:** Does it explain the science behind the hazard, or only the rule? If it only states the rule, redesign it.
- 02 › Invest in hazard science training for your EHS team:** Not compliance training — science training. Chemistry, physics, human factors, failure analysis.
- 03 › Build engineering fluency in your safety function:** Ensure your EHS officers can engage meaningfully with your maintenance and engineering teams on equipment risk.

04 › Evaluate your AI safety tools critically: Ask your vendors what happens when the AI is wrong. Ensure your people know how to override, escalate, and reason independently.

05 › Commission a Safety Education Audit: Measure not just training completion – measure comprehension. Test whether your frontline workers can explain the hazard, not just recite the procedure.

V. A DEVELOPED INDIA IS BUILT ON SAFE FACTORIES

The vision of Viksit Bharat – a developed India by 2047 – cannot be realised on the backs of workers who go to work not knowing whether they will come home. Our factories are the engine of that development. And an engine that injures or kills its operators is not an engine – it is a liability.

Safety is not a department. It is not a poster. It is not an annual pledge. It is a level of knowledge – scientific, engineering, and human – that must be embedded in every person who steps onto a factory floor. The theme of this year's National Safety Week is not aspirational. It is urgent. Engage, Educate, Empower. In that order. Starting with Educate – because without genuine knowledge, engagement is just noise and empowerment is dangerous.



We stand ready to work alongside you – as consultants, as technology partners, and as fellow believers in the idea that zero harm is not a slogan. It is an achievable standard.

But it begins with education. Real education. This week. With resolve and respect,

Sincere Regards,

Sparrow

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This letter is issued on the occasion of the 55th National Safety Week,

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