

Luck Runs Out.

*A Practical Framework for Human Performance, Operational Alignment,
and Front-Line Leadership*



Getting Beyond the “Unease”

CHS Laurel’s **Luck Runs Out.** initiative was developed in response to a practical leadership question: how does an organization move from general safety awareness and “chronic unease” into consistent, intentional operational practice?

The refinery already had safety programs, improving safety performance, and no recent significant safety incidents. The concern was not a lack of effort or compliance. The deeper challenge was how to strengthen the human

side of operations, including leadership, communication, risk discussion, decision-making, transitions and handoffs, team learning, standards, and alignment across levels of the organization.

The Operating Problem

High-risk industrial operations depend on more than procedures and controls. They also depend on how people interpret conditions, communicate risk, make decisions, adapt under pressure, and coordinate action when the plan no longer fully matches the situation.

Across many complex operating environments, recurring issues often include:

- Unclear decision rights
- Inconsistent leadership presence
- Weak or uneven discussions of risk
- Poor handoffs and coordination
- Uneven application of standards
- Hesitancy, drift, or delayed action
- Fragmented learning and adaptation

Existing schools of thought—such as HRO, HOP, CRM, and related human performance approaches—each address important parts of this problem. But CHS recognized the need for a more integrated operating frame: one that connects values, leadership behavior, human performance, communication, and execution into a common way of working.

In 2025 CHS entered into a working partnership with Mission-Centered Solutions—a firm with prior experience in building operational culture for other high-risk environments—to build a unique development system to meet the refinery’s goals.

Program Architecture

The LRO/LatE effort is structured as a phased implementation designed to build from workforce foundation to leadership capacity.

Phase I (Luck Runs Out.) establishes shared vocabulary and baseline awareness across all employees through one-day sessions with approximately 20 employees, covering operational values, risk awareness, stress as operational risk, perception and decision-making, communication responsibilities, and shared language for discussing the human side of work.

Phase II (Leading at the Edge) builds front-line leadership capacity through modular sessions conducted in small cohorts, emphasizing practical leadership execution in high-risk environments with realistic problem sets, communication scenarios, decision-making practice, leader's intent, briefing/debriefing methods, and stress awareness application.

Phase	Purpose	Audience	Format	Key Focus Areas
Phase I Luck Runs Out.	Workforce Foundation Establish shared vocabulary and baseline awareness	All employees & selected contractors	One-day sessions ~20 participants	• Operational values • Risk awareness • Stress as operational risk • Perception and decision-making • Communication responsibilities • Shared language for the human side of work
Phase II Leading at the Edge	Leadership Development Build front-line leadership capacity	Front-line supervisors, lead operators, emerging leadership bench	Ten one-day sessions ~6 participants per cohort. intense coaching and development	• Practical leadership execution in high-risk environments • Realistic problem sets • Communication scenarios • Intent-based Operations • Briefing /debriefing techniques • Stress awareness & planning

Program Objectives and Value

The central premise is that safety and reliability are shaped by the daily leadership system that determines how work is framed, discussed, adapted, and corrected—not achieved only through rules, procedures, or awareness. The LRO/LatE model helps CHS Laurel move toward a more deliberate operating culture by:

- Making the human side of performance more visible and discussable
- Giving employees a common language for risk, stress, perception, and communication
- Developing front-line leaders as carriers of operational culture
- Translating Human and Organizational Performance principles into practical leadership behaviors
- Strengthening alignment between values, expectations, decisions, and action
- Supporting more consistent execution under pressure, ambiguity, and changing conditions

Leadership is the Hinge Point

Leading at the Edge is not generic leadership training. It is designed around the reality that first- and second-line leaders are the hinge point of operational culture, and that there are unique demands in leading high-risk and high-consequence work.

Most of the workforce experiences culture through first line supervision, who daily set the real priorities, reinforce or ignore behaviors, model what right looks like. They synchronize upper and lower levels of the organization, and translate organizational intent into crew-level action.

The program emphasizes practiced execution over theory, recognizing that front-line supervisors and lead operators represent the critical connection between organizational strategy and daily operational reality.

Current Direction and Next Steps

The initial workforce development phases create the foundation for sustained operational culture development. Future phases are intended to reinforce the system through doctrine development, operational tools, policy alignment, leadership support structures, sustainment mechanisms, and continued growth.

The objective is not to add another safety program—the objective is to build a more coherent operating frame that helps people think, lead, coordinate, and adapt more effectively when work becomes complex.

For questions or additional information, contact Jaxson O'Brien at CHS Laurel Refinery (Jaxson.O'Brien@chsinc.com, 406-628-5428).