

A chef in a white uniform and black shoes is plating food on a stainless steel counter. Several white plates with artistic food presentations are lined up. In the background, there are squeeze bottles of sauce and a bowl.

## CASE STUDY

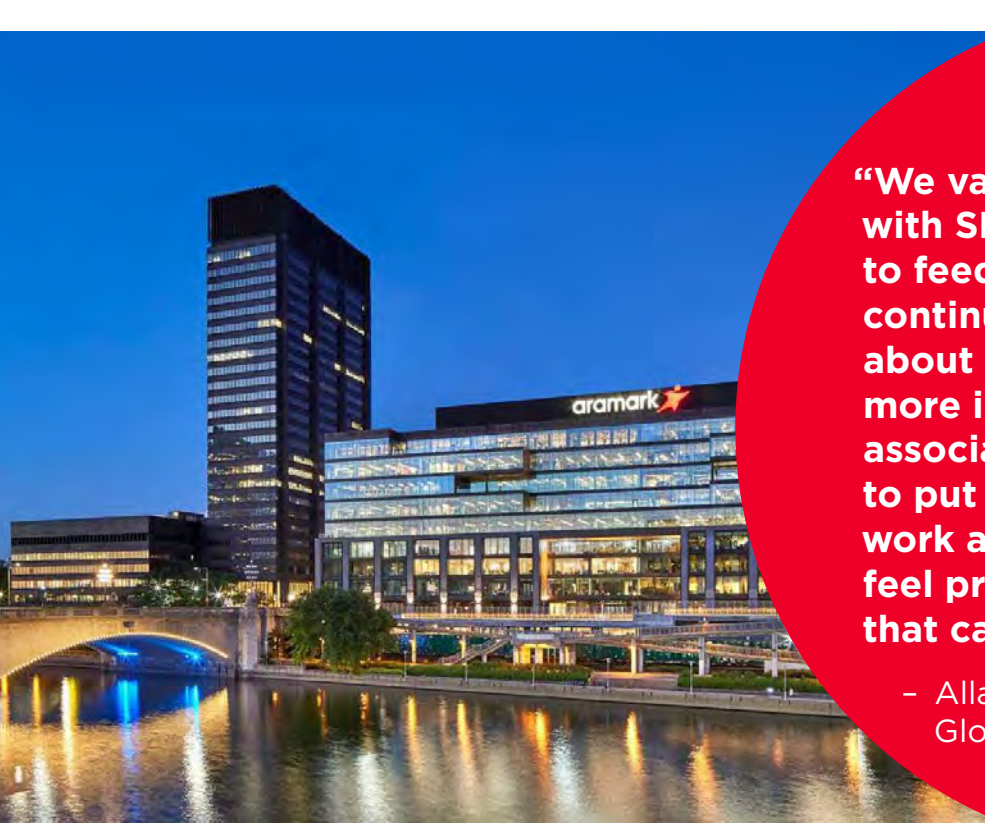
How a Corporate Footwear Program Can Spearhead a Culture of Safety Within the Hospitality Industry





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**“We value our partnership with SFC. They have been open to feedback and suggestions for continuous improvement. It is not about selling or buying shoes but more importantly, ensuring that our associates have every opportunity to put their best foot forward at work as well as go home safe. I feel proud to work for a company that cares about its people.”**

– Allan Fernandes, Vice President,  
Global Safety & Risk Control

## INTRODUCTION

**Caring is the new currency in the hospitality industry, and nothing demonstrates care quite like keeping someone safe on the job.**

In a bustling warehouse or commercial kitchen, workplace safety centers around preventing common injuries such as slips, trips, and falls (STFs). But sometimes employees struggle to afford the most reliable safety tool: a good pair of slip-resistant shoes. That’s why Aramark partnered with Shoes For Crews (SFC) to put slip-resistant shoes on all their frontline associates in the United States.

At Aramark, we’re actively engaging our associates to deliver on our vision to be the

most admired employer and most admired hospitality partner. The innovative Safety Footwear Program has boosted employee engagement and morale, increased safety compliance, and streamlined internal operations—while reinforcing our deep-rooted culture of safety. By extension, clients and customers benefit from the best-in-class service that can only come from a healthy, confident workforce.

Most importantly, the Aramark Safety Footwear Program allows our people to do their jobs safely and return home to their lives outside of work.

This case study will illustrate how a company-wide safety initiative can yield meaningful business advantages within the hospitality industry.

# THE COSTS OF SLIPS, TRIPS, AND FALLS

85%  
of workers'  
compensation  
claims can be  
traced to  
employees falling  
on slick floors.<sup>1</sup>



**\$70B**

Work slip and  
fall injuries cost  
employers and  
employees  
\$70 billion each  
year in workers'  
compensation and  
medical expenses.<sup>2</sup>



There are 95 million lost work days due  
to slip and fall injuries each year.<sup>3</sup>



Slips and falls  
account for  
65% of all work  
days lost due  
to injury.<sup>4</sup>



**27.5%**

Slips, trips, and  
falls account for  
27.5% of nonfatal  
injuries and illnesses  
resulting in days  
away from work.<sup>5</sup>

## What makes a safe shoe?

In our line of business, not just any sneaker or boot will do. High-quality safety footwear is not widely available in retail stores—and not all products that claim to be slip-resistant will work in a commercial kitchen or similar environments.

Genuinely slip-resistant footwear must ensure sufficient surface contact and demonstrate a high coefficient of friction (COF) score, a measure of traction. What's more, the entire shoe must be rigorously tested against a variety of contaminants—as SFC does—so the COF score accurately reflects how the footwear will perform in real-world settings.

The shoes also should be easy to clean, to prevent residue from building up on the soles and keep them looking nice. And as anyone who works on their feet can tell you, footwear needs to be comfortable enough to last an entire shift.

*“The slip-resistant shoes provided at work are top-notch all around, a really good product. They are much better than the cheap shoes you’d get from a big-box store.”*

– Kevin Wilson, Aramark frontline associate

1 Industrial Safety & Occupational Health Markets

2 National Safety Council Injury Facts 2003 edition

3 U.S. Dept. of Labor

4 U.S. Occupation Safety and Health Administration

5 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



## SLIPS, TRIPS, AND FALLS: A REAL HAZARD

Slipping hazards are inherent to certain workplaces, especially commercial kitchens, where oil, grease, and other substances inevitably end up on the floor. STFs are some of the most common causes of injury in the hospitality industry, leading to bodily harm, time away from work, and workers' compensation claims, as well as indirect expenses like lost productivity, overtime, and replacement wages.

The risk is never far from employees' minds. Frontline associate and barista Tasaya Miller has spent 10 years with Aramark, and her mother worked with the company when Tasaya was growing up. While thankfully neither of them have been injured on the job, she knows it's always a possibility. "I just don't want to be at work worrying about falling," Miller says.

As such, preventing STF accidents is a critical component of safety and risk management in the hospitality industry. It starts with keeping floors clean and dry, fixing flooring defects, and using properly designed stairs and handrails. But one of the best tools for avoiding STFs goes on your feet: A solid pair of

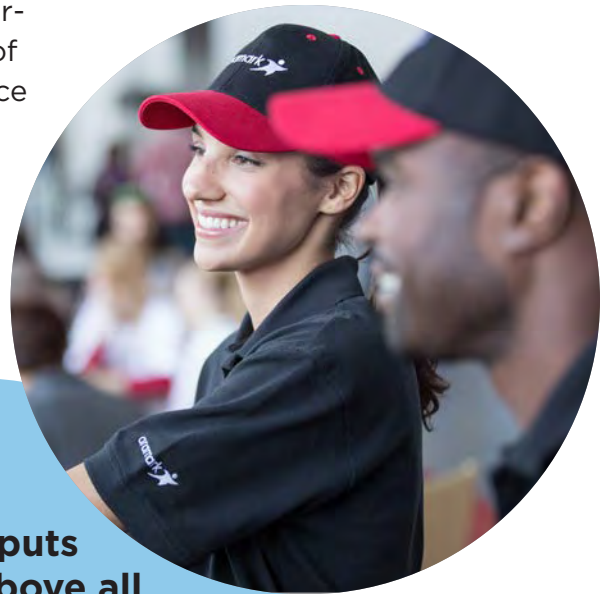
slip-resistant shoes. Like many hospitality companies, Aramark has long required them of anyone who sets foot in one of our kitchens.

## THE ROLE OF SLIP-RESISTANT FOOTWEAR

The efficacy of mandatory footwear programs is well-proven. In 2019 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety, Division of Safety Research (CDC/NIOSH), published a four-year (53-month) study of about 17,000 food service workers employed by Aramark Education

at 226 U.S. school districts. The intervention group was given free slip-resistant shoes, while the control group was responsible for buying their own footwear. SFC was chosen for the study as an unbiased industry partner with 5-star rated slip-resistant footwear.

CDC/NIOSH concluded that the free slip-resistant shoes reduced slip-related injuries by 67%. Meanwhile, the control group saw no reduction in STF injuries. This study later formed the basis for our company-wide Safety Footwear Program.



**"The program puts people first, above all. We were willing to put our money behind the rhetoric and make a commitment that's both visible and tangible."**

– Todd Gardner  
Vice President,  
Safety & Risk Solutions

# THE MOST EFFECTIVE SLIP-RESISTANT SHOES IN THE INDUSTRY

- 
- 1 Exclusive SFC slip-resistant and oil-resistant outsole:** Safer steps in slippery environments—featured on all SFC styles.
  - 2 Clog-resistant outsole:** Prevent tracking contaminants.
  - 3 Aluminum, Steel, Composite and Nano Composite Safety Toes:** Shoes and boots meeting ASTM F-2413 standards bearing a class 75 rating.
  - 4 TripGuard™:** With minimized “trip hazard zone.” This allows for smoother transitions between floor surfaces.
  - 5 Water-resistant:** Many of SFC’s uppers come with SpillGuard™ coating.
  - 6 SpillGuard™:** Spills happen, and hot scalding liquids can burn. That’s why SFC uses SpillGuard™.
  - 7 Comfort Forward:** Comfortable midsoles & removable insoles. These provide enhanced comfort when you’re on your feet for hours.
  - 8 Lightweight:** Lighter construction & breathable fabrics. This helps you stay cooler and lighter on your feet.

## CHALLENGES TO CLIMB

Aramark has long sourced slip-resistant footwear from SFC, dedicating significant financial resources to do so. But several challenges stood in the way of making this effort as effective as it could be.

### Decentralization:

Aramark employs hundreds of thousands of associates across Business Dining, Higher Education, Healthcare, Facilities, and other settings. For years, each line of business sourced footwear from SFC themselves, with different terms and pricing. This made for uneven results across the company.

### Staffing complexities:

Our front line includes union and non-union employees, as well as associates hired by our clients. Each group is subject to different workplace regulations, contracts, and benefits that may or may not account for their uniforms.

## Ensuring compliance:

The mandatory footwear policy required location managers to track down frontline associates, one by one, and ensure they were wearing proper shoes—a time-consuming process, to say the least. If the shoes came from a retail store, it was hard to tell whether they met our safety standards.

## Product perception:

In the past, the SFC product was not always deemed the most comfortable or most durable. If they were to remain Aramark's footwear partner of choice, we had to persuade people to give them another try. "To their credit, Shoes For Crews has been great about listening to feedback and implementing changes," notes Patrick Davey, Vice President, Environmental, Health & Safety. "They were always the best in slip-resistance, but we felt they needed to step up their footwear styles, comfort, and durability—and they did."

## Social equity:

Knowing you need to wear safety shoes is one thing but affording them is quite another. Some employees were wearing inappropriate shoes or shoes well past their prime. As Gardner puts it: "A \$45 pair of shoes may not

seem like a lot, but that's \$45 that could go to groceries. Some people were literally coming to work in duct-taped shoes, so it's hard to put a value on correcting that."

With so much at stake, we knew it was time to rethink our approach to preventing STFs in the workplace. It wasn't enough to require that frontline employees wear slip-resistant shoes or to provide a means for purchasing them. We had to incorporate footwear safety standards into our company culture.

"If we could ensure the footwear was appropriate, make sure everyone is wearing the right shoe for their role, and increase adoption—those three things would lead to better outcomes for our people," shares Mike Doughty, Vice President, Corporate Procurement. "And way down the line, we knew it would lead to better financial outcomes for the company."



The Safety Footwear Program marketing collateral includes both printed and digital materials: catalogs, posters and flyers, video tutorials, program guides, FAQs, and more. Multilingual translations are available for Aramark's non-English-speaking associates.

## SOLUTION: THE PERFECT FIT

A powerful idea emerged: Put high-quality safety shoes on every single U.S. frontline associate at Aramark. In 2020, we worked with SFC to launch a **comprehensive, centralized Safety Footwear Program**. Food service associates would receive slip-resistant styles, while those in Facilities Services would get safety-toe styles appropriate for their roles.

The initiative came together organically, with input from leadership in risk management, supply chain, operations, and other business functions. “This was a strategic investment in our people, and the right thing to do,” says Doughty. “It was a long, iterative process of creating a program that really made sense for the company.”

The free or discounted footwear is safe, comfortable, and fashionable—and makes all the difference in preventing STF injuries. “We’ve got 20-year-old college kids who want to wear shoes that look cool, not clunky or institutional,” Gardner points out. “Overcoming that really helped alleviate a lot of the resistance we had in the organization.”

The program’s positioning feels much more like a company benefit than a mandatory safety policy—because it is. From the ordering process to the delivery packaging to the feedback loop, every

aspect of the Safety Footwear Program demonstrates that employee wellbeing is number-one. The program was designed to streamline the manager approval process as well, saving time and resources while preserving company oversight.

The pilot took place in FY2019 and included over 12,000 associates from all Aramark lines of business, in both Food and Facilities. The program yielded a sustained reduction in both the frequency and severity of STFs at these locations, throughout the duration of the pilot.

“It says a lot to our associates that we’re not asking them to

make that investment,” adds Brent Beringer, Regional District Manager with James Madison University (JMU), which took part in the pilot program. “We’re making that investment on their behalf.”

The program launched companywide in early 2020. While there was initial skepticism about the financial ROI and whether we would see widespread adoption among frontline employees, that was a chance the cross-functional team was willing to take.

“Just let us roll the program out,” Doughty recalls saying. “Once people start talking, they’re going to want to get in the shoes.”

## GOALS OF THE SAFETY FOOTWEAR PROGRAM

1. Keep frontline associates on their feet so they can go home safely to their loved ones.
2. Take care of our communities where we live and work.
3. Reinforce a culture of wellbeing and safety at Aramark—and an environment where people want to come to work.
4. Streamline operations to make it as easy as possible for associates and managers to follow the mandatory safety footwear policy.
5. Improve the company’s long-term STF rate and other safety metrics, in turn boosting productivity and saving money.
6. Become a market leader in hospitality workplace safety and preventing STFs.

***“Creating a working environment where people feel like we care about their safety is as important, if not more important, than any other consideration.”***

– Mike Doughty, Vice President, Corporate Procurement



## ARAMARK AND SHOES FOR CREWS: PARTNERS IN SAFETY

We cannot achieve our vision of Target Zero—no harm to people or the environment—without the expertise of partners who share our commitment to safety. Slip-resistant footwear manufacturer SFC had been our footwear partner for decades, and we were one of their biggest customers. With the Safety Footwear Program, we took things to the next level.

Corporate footwear programs are nothing new, but the Aramark approach was distinctly different. “No other company of this magnitude had ever come to us before and said, ‘We need to protect employees,’” attests Aldo Fratta, Regional Director for Hospitality Sales, Shoes For Crews. “From the beginning, we calculated and implemented the Aramark program as an employee benefit. For SFC it’s not about selling shoes, it’s about keeping employees safe.”

Along the way, SFC provided complete program support,

customized educational and marketing materials, a flexible and convenient ordering system, payroll deduction integration, and data and analytics to measure program impact.

The complexity of our workforce required SFC to develop new systems and technology that would facilitate the payroll deductions, tracking, and reporting. SFC also works closely with Aramark to promote the program to associates, managers, and administrators for maximum impact.



Once an associate selects their slip-resistant shoe style, SFC ships it straight to their home or workplace for free.

## HOW THE SAFETY FOOTWEAR PROGRAM WORKS

- 1. Onboarding.** All Aramark frontline associates are eligible for a pair of shoes at hiring and can order in advance, so their footwear is ready on Day One. They can order online or seek help from HR if they lack internet access. Managers are able to place bulk orders for grand openings when hundreds of employees may be starting on the same day or for events with a short turnaround time. 
- 2. Shopping.** Through the SFC website, associates can access exclusive pricing on name brands such as New Balance, Cole Haan, and Dockers—the same brands found in shoe stores. Because the shoes come from SFC, we know they meet our safety standards. 
- 3. Approving.** Placing an item in a shopping cart triggers a text message to their manager, who can quickly approve or reject the order via an online portal. 
- 4. Payment.** Aramark subsidizes each pair of shoes. Any cost above the subsidy is paid through payroll deduction. The SFC catalog includes more than 200 approved shoe styles, with eight no-cost styles. 
- 5. Shipping.** The shoes ship free to the associate's home or workplace. 
- 6. Wearing.** Employees can wear their new shoes to work, test the fit, and exchange for free within 60 days. 
- 7. Tracking.** Real-time compliance data is available to management at any time, including who in their profit center needs to obtain shoes and the dates they are eligible. 
- 8. Upgrading.** At any time, Aramark associates may purchase additional, unsubsidized pairs of shoes for themselves or their family at the negotiated corporate price. 
- 9. Renewal.** Associates are eligible for one new pair of shoes per year. SFC alerts them by email when it's time to replace their shoes. 

## RESULTS: STEPPING INTO SAFETY

It takes years to see full results from safety initiatives; this is a given in almost any industry. But nearly two years into the new program, we're already yielding meaningful business benefits.

### Safer employees:

In the first year of the Safety Footwear Program, STFs decreased 22% across all lines of business YOY, and an astounding 42% compared to historical rates. Early adopters of the Safety Footwear Program have seen even higher reductions. For example, our Corrections business has reduced STFs by more than 56%.

Even more impressive is that overall injury rates continue to decline as well—a ripple effect fueled, we believe, by increased focus and attention to safety sparked by the Safety Footwear Program.

### More efficient operations:

Measuring compliance has been essential for gauging the program's impact and success. SFC's reporting systems allow

us to track participation rates from a global companywide snapshot, by sector or region, all the way down to the individual employee.

With the guesswork and leg work eliminated, managers can devote their attention elsewhere. "It's quite an improvement from trying to track folks down, ensuring that they had a slip-resistant shoe, making sure that we did a payroll deduction for them, all those kinds of things," says Beringer. "Now it's automated, and employees get the protection they need."

And by centralizing our procurement with SFC, we have been able to purchase nearly twice as many safety shoes as before, for significant cost savings.

### More engaged employees:

According to employee feedback surveys, Aramark associates are happier and more confident with the new footwear, and the program has bolstered their self-esteem and pride in their work. A good number are upgrading to the more expensive styles, a testament to the shoes' popularity.



**"I'm just grateful, knowing my work shoes are taken care of."**

– Kevin Wilson,  
Frontline Associate



**Proven resilience:**

We achieved these results when the cards were stacked against our entire industry—proof that doing the right thing transcends even the toughest of times. “The pandemic meant a complete upheaval of the majority of our business processes,” Gardner explains. “And yet in 2020 we had our best safety year in terms of our key metric: our OSHA rate. Then 2021 was even better, as our overall injury rate dropped by another 11%, and through

the first three months of our new fiscal years we are seeing another 25% reduction over prior year! That’s how we know we’re onto something with the Safety Footwear Program.”

**True safety culture:**

The immediate impact on company culture and morale has been striking. “Wearing proper shoes, day in and day out, has definitely become hardwired and part of our everyday safety culture,” says Fernando Figueroa, Director of Safety and Risk, Higher Education.

## Success Metrics, FY2020

**60,000+**  
**PAIRS**   
of shoes distributed

**80%**   
**ADOPTION**  
among all eligible U.S.  
food service associates

**STF-related injuries DOWN 42%**  



From the pilot program, % of surveyed employees who rated the following as “**excellent**” or “**good**”:

**Ease of  
ordering**  
**86.2%** 

**Slip  
resistance**  
**76.9%** 

**Customer  
service**  
**76.8%** 

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1. Exchange information:** Sharing partner data is critical, as is integrating technology, for smoothest operations and accurate tracking toward goals. 
- 2. Communicate intentionally:** Use simple, clear communication to explain the purpose of the program and how employees should participate. 
- 3. Give it time:** A company's way of doing things won't change overnight, even if it was convoluted before. 
- 4. Offer choice:** The Safety Footwear Program's open catalog lets associates embrace their individual sense of style, so it's easier for managers to mandate compliance. "Footwear is very personal. If people are not happy with their shoes, they are just not going to wear them, and that impacts the whole program," says Fratta. 
- 5. Know what matters:** Safety is the top priority, but it's not the only factor for success. The trifecta of safety, comfort, and fashion helped Aramark and SFC achieve high adoption with the Safety Footwear Program. 
- 6. Let word spread:** Don't underestimate the power of word-of-mouth marketing. When employees enjoy a company benefit, they're apt to talk about it. "The message goes out in the community. Being able to tell folks that we include their entire work uniform, including shoes, at hire is a differentiator," Beringer says. 
- 7. Share upward:** Safety says a lot about a hospitality partner. Don't hesitate to share the highlights of your safety initiatives with current and prospective clients. Says Doughty: "We've even had clients say, 'Our employees are jealous that your employees get shoes. Can we buy our employees shoes through your program, so they don't come to work for you?'" 
- 8. Safety is a no-brainer:** You may face hurdles but aligning on workplace safety won't be one of them. "It's rare to find an opportunity like this that ticks all the boxes," Gardner says of the program. "Yes, it's a safety decision and a financial decision. But it's an employee value proposition too." 

## SUMMARY: PUTTING OUR BEST FOOT FORWARD

Implementing a comprehensive Safety Footwear Program was the right move to protect Aramark's frontline associates from slips, trips, and falls. By partnering with Shoes For Crews, we devised a profoundly effective way to infuse our core safety principles into our daily operations.

Along the way, we've sparked a critical conversation about workplace safety in the hospitality industry. Every time we tell a new or prospective hire about the Safety Footwear Program, and every time an associate laces up for a day at work, we're sustaining a culture of safety. That confidence and care empowers our people—Aramark's greatest asset—to deliver exceptional experiences.

"Putting these shoes on, I feel the difference instantly," Miller says of the company-provided footwear. "I feel safer wearing them."

SFC now offers the Aramark Safety Footwear Program blueprint to other companies. "We're sending people home the way they came to work. It's been very rewarding to see how this program has been implemented and how the culture has changed," Fratta attests.

To learn more about how Aramark is making a positive impact on people, visit [aramark.com/sustainability#people](https://aramark.com/sustainability#people)

## What's Next?

Now that we have our footing, we will work to continually optimize the Safety Footwear Program. This includes:

- Broadening beyond North America (expansion into Canada, Mexico, and Europe is currently in progress).
- Exploring program incentives to further motivate employee participation.
- Translating program materials and safety materials into even more languages.
- Leveraging surveys, proprietary research, and other input to improve product performance—so the slip-resistant shoes are even more effective, durable, and comfortable to wear in multiple environments.
- Making the program available to temporary and seasonal labor.
- Sourcing more shoe slip covers for kitchen visitors.







**“More of our people are going home safe today than they did before. You can’t put a number or value on that.”**

- Mike Doughty, Vice President, Corporate Procurement

## Aramark’s SAFE Policy

The Safety Footwear Program exemplifies the broader safety principles that shape everyday behaviors at Aramark. To achieve Target Zero, we are guided by the Aramark SAFE™ Management System, our common framework for operating safely, managing risk, and achieving our food, occupational, and environmental safety goals.

### Aramark’s SAFE Principles



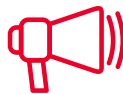
**Lead a Culture of Safety**



**Do the Right Thing**



**Engage and Educate Employees**



**Stop and Speak Up**



**Keep Learning and Growing**



**Source Safely and Responsibly**

## ABOUT ARAMARK

Aramark (NYSE: ARMK) provides food, facilities, and uniform services to millions of people, in 19 countries around the world, every day. Rooted in service and united by our purpose, we strive to do great things for each other, our partners, our communities, and our planet. Learn more at [www.aramark.com](http://www.aramark.com) and connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

## ABOUT SHOES FOR CREWS

Shoes For Crews® is a leading designer and manufacturer of slip-resistant footwear, protecting millions worldwide. Headquartered in Boca Raton, Florida, Shoes For Crews® began producing slip-resistant footwear in 1984 with a mission to create a safer workplace. The company's focus is to deliver best-in-class safety footwear with superior slip-resistant outsole technology, unmatched comfort and on-trend styling through a complete line of slip-resistant footwear designed to bring each employee home safely. For more information, visit [www.shoesforcrews.com](http://www.shoesforcrews.com).

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