



MUTUAL TRUST

The Short Line Safety Institute has adopted the U.S. Department of Transportation Safety Council's definition of a **Strong Safety Culture**, defined as "The shared values, actions, and behaviors that demonstrate a commitment to safety over competing goals and demands." A strong safety culture contains 10 core elements (<https://www.shortlinesafety.org/about/strong-safety-culture/>).

Element 8: Mutual Trust Is Fostered between Employees and the Railroad

One of the cornerstones of any positive organizational culture is trust. Trust among all railroad employees, from craft employees to senior leaders, can go a long way to support safety by facilitating open and honest communication and minimizing fears of reprisal. Employees who have developed a relationship of trust with their supervisors may feel more willing to raise safety concerns in novel situations when they are unsure of how the railroad might respond.

Trust is a two-way street. To gain employee trust, you must also demonstrate that you trust them. Below are some skills and tools that can help to create a sense of mutual trust between senior leaders, managers and employees:

- Utilize straight talk and ensure communication is clear and concise
- Always demonstrate respect
- Do not gossip
- Be transparent
- Be a team player
- Share information
- If it's wrong, make it right
- Practice loyalty
- Be result oriented
- Seek continual improvement
- Clarify expectations and seek clarification as needed
- Be personally accountable and hold others equally accountable
- Praise your co-workers and employees when it's appropriate
- Respectfully provide honest feedback
- Exhibit trust: those who desire to be trusted must be trustworthy
- Boost value by developing your skills and the skills of your associates
- Be consistent
- Pay attention to non-verbal communication--actions can speak volumes
- When new hires are brought on board, welcome them graciously and make them feel at home