



50 F Street, NW., Suite 500
Washington, DC 20001
www.shortlinesafety.org

Contact:

Amy Krouse
akrouse@aslrra.org
(Cell) 312-371-6947

SHORT LINE SAFETY INSTITUTE HOLDS FIRST ALERT PROGRAM AT NEW ORLEANS AND GULF
COAST RAILWAY

ALERT Program provides hazardous materials incident response training to first responders

WASHINGTON – March 7, 2023 – The Short Line Safety Institute (SLSI) has completed its first [Assistance for Local Emergency Response Training \(ALERT\)](#) program at the New Orleans and Gulf Coast Railway in Belle Chasse, Louisiana this past week. Members of local emergency response, including the Jefferson Parish HazMat Team, the Jefferson Parish Fire Department, and the Gretna Police Department, and railroad employees participated in training combining instruction, hands-on training, and interactive experience-based discussions tailored to meet first responders' needs.

The Short Line Safety Institute's expert instructors, who have more than 600 years of combined experience in hazardous materials transportation safety, covered:

- Baseline Information
- Safety & Scene Size-up
- Scene Isolation & Product Identification
- Incident Management
- Rail Industry Collaboration

“Ensuring that local first responders can rapidly and effectively respond to a hazardous materials incident in partnership with railroad personnel will provide the best opportunity for a safe well-coordinated incident response and community protection. In the more than 200 hazmat training classes that the SLSI has provided to short line railroads since the program began, the ability to train local first responders has been a consistent request shared by participants, and we are pleased to be able to meet that need with the ALERT program,” said Tom Murta, Executive Director, SLSI.

The program is provided at no cost to the participating entities with grant funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) through the [Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Administration](#) (PHMSA).

“The New Orleans and Gulf Coast Railway has an exemplary safety record, in part due to the company leadership’s commitment to continuously train and improve preparedness for any incident,” said Mitch Harris, Director Safety, Training & Regulatory Compliance, Rio Grande Pacific Corporation, parent company of New Orleans and Gulf Coast Railway. “The Short Line Safety Institute’s ALERT program complements our current training. Following this exercise our area first responders are better equipped to work closely with our railroad personnel to respond to a hazmat incident, prioritizing the safety of our community members, employees and property.”

The ALERT grant promotes hazmat response training for volunteer or remote emergency responders, familiarizing participants with railroad operations and regulations.

“One key aspect in any major incident is the importance of communication. During the ALERT program not only do we review railroad operations, but we also stress the importance of proper and timely communications. In addition, by utilizing case studies we

pass along valuable lessons to manage low frequency high risk events,” said Harry Hopes, Certified Hazardous Materials Manager, one of the program instructors.

The Short Line Safety Institute recently recognized its seventh year of operations, with more than 100 Safety Culture Assessments completed, and more than 200 hazardous materials training classes conducted on short line railroads. For more information on the ALERT grant and other training programs offered at no cost to railroads, visit www.shortlinesafety.org.

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About SLSI - The Short Line Safety Institute (SLSI) is a non-profit corporation that conducts Safety Culture Assessments, provides Hazardous Material Instructor and Leadership Development programs, and is the educational, training and research source for short line and regional railroads concerning safety culture. www.shortlinesafety.org, @shortlinesafety