Leading Forward: Developing Leadership Skills and Strong Safety Cultures Across the Rail Industry

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A strategic collaboration of expertise

SHORT LINE SAFETY INSTITUTE

SOURCES OF EXPERTISE

FRA
Research, Development & Technology

JOHN A. VOLPE
National Transportation Systems Center

UCONN
University of Connecticut

ASLRRRA
American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association

PHMSA
Hazardous Materials Grant Program
It starts with culture

**MISSION**
To enhance the SAFETY CULTURE and SAFETY PERFORMANCE of short line and regional railroads through MEANINGFUL AND PRODUCTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

**VISION**
The SHORT LINE and REGIONAL RAILROAD INDUSTRY performs at an INCREASINGLY HIGHER LEVEL OF SAFETY

**4 PRIMARY FUNCTIONS**
- ASSESSMENTS
- TRAINING
- EDUCATION
- RESEARCH
Strengthening safety culture through workforce development

Leading Forward: Skills Development for Railroad Professionals
Transforming managers into safety leaders

**Execution**
- Smart Force Group Facilitators
- 2 Days of Leadership Training
- 1 Day of Strong Safety Culture
- On-Site or Virtual
- Provided at No Cost

**Attributes**
- Multi-Method: Videos, Activities, and Text
- Data-Focused
- Engaging
- Combines Leadership Skills and Safety Culture

**Components**
- Individual Exercises
- Partner Activities
- Team Activities
- Workbook
- Online Resources
- Feedback Survey

Smart Force Group Facilitators
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Multi-Method: Videos, Activities, and Text
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Engaging
Combines Leadership Skills and Safety Culture

Individual Exercises
Partner Activities
Team Activities
Workbook
Online Resources
Feedback Survey
Agenda
Six Leadership Skills

- Communicating Effectively
- Delivering Constructive Feedback
- Managing Agreements
- Coaching
- Building High Performance Teams
- Giving Credit
MANAGER

Maintains
Administers
Short Term

LEADER

Develops
Innovates
Long Term
Team Exercise
Design a Coat of Arms

Team Values
Team Vision
Team Mission
THE GREAT BRIDGE BUILD

Creativity - Ingenuity - Strength
# Leadership Plan

**Idealized Influence**
- Instills confidence
- Leads by example

**The 4 “Is”**
- Is a role model
- Sets expectations

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10CORE
Elements of a Strong Safety Culture
Reaching railroads across the United States

Key Accomplishments
Since Program Inception (May 2019) through December, 2023

- **33** Classes Completed
- **17** States Visited
- **543** Railroaders Reached
- **152** Railroads Reached

Classes by Region (9 Virtual)

- PACIFIC: 8
- CENTRAL: 6
- EASTERN: 4
- SOUTHERN: 6

Ten classes currently scheduled for 2024
Strengthening safety culture through workforce development

**Sample:** Individuals (N = 321) from 118 railroads who participated in the SLSI Leading Forward Training between 2019 & 2023

**Procedure:** Class participants completed an online survey after class with multiple choice and open ended questions

**KEY FINDINGS**

- **98.1%** of respondents said the class was a worthwhile investment in their career development
- **95.9%** of respondents said they will use their newly learned skills in their current jobs
- **85.7%** of respondents said they were extremely likely to recommend the class to a colleague in their organization
- **84.2%** of respondents said they were extremely likely to recommend the class to a colleague in the industry
Opportunities for Improvement

- Clearer instructions for group projects
- More time for group activity preparation
- Clearer instructions for navigating the class module book and activity book
- More railroad-specific examples in the class
IT STARTS WITH CULTURE

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