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## SHORT LINE SAFETY INSTITUTE TO SERVE RAILROADS BY ADDRESSING AREAS OF INDUSTRY OPPORTUNITY

*Annual analysis of completed Safety Culture Assessments identifies prominent strengths in safety culture, and guides future actions to assist in addressing areas of opportunity*

WASHINGTON – May 27, 2025 – The [Short Line Safety Institute](http://www.shortlinesafety.org) (SLSI) has released the annual Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) research [results paper](#) analyzing the twenty Safety Culture Assessments (SCAs) conducted on short line, regional, historic, tourist, commuter, and passenger railroads in 2024. The analysis notes five areas of safety culture strength across the industry, and identifies five areas of opportunity.

The annual systematic review informs SLSI of the industry's needs as it continues to develop programs, resources, and services.

“Our process for measuring safety culture is the most [comprehensive and robust](#) in the railroad industry. The systematic review of SCAs conducted each year identifies positive safety culture trends across the industry, and most importantly, provides a roadmap for development of programs and resources to address areas of opportunity,” said Sam Cotton, Director of Safety Culture Programs, SLSI. “This year’s results identified creating and implementing Safety Action Plans as the most often noted opportunity area for improving

Safety Culture, and SLSI is actively working to address that opportunity in SCAs conducted in 2025.”

The annual frequency analysis identified the following areas of strength:

- *Provision of PPE*: Railroads provide PPE to employees as needed and it is readily available.
- *Approaching Management with Safety Concerns*: Employees feel comfortable communicating safety related issues/concerns.
- *Employee Empowerment*: Employees feel empowered to work safely.
- *Accountability/Responsibility for Safety*: Employees at all levels take personal responsibility for their safety, as well as the safety of their coworkers and the public.
- *Coaching/Mentoring/Modeling*: Managers/supervisors are modeling safe behaviors while in the field and during interactions with employees.

Opportunities for improvement include:

- *Safety Action Plan*: Some railroads could create, make improvements to, or better communicate a safety action plan.
- *System for Reporting Safety Concerns/Resolutions*: Some railroads could improve their systems for reporting and tracking employee concerns and resolutions to these concerns.
- *Housekeeping*: The organization or maintenance of the property at some railroads could be improved.
- *Recognition of Safe Work Practices*: Some employees express a desire for more recognition (beyond awards) and reinforcement in the field for engaging in safe work practices.
- *Efficiency/Operational Testing*: Operational testing is conducted but feedback to employees could be improved.

“Just as railroads seek to continuously improve their Safety Culture, SLSI seeks to continuously improve our service to the industry,” said Tom Murta, Executive Director, SLSI. “From this year’s analysis, we are pleased to see 2024 industry strengths and improvements include areas that are addressed in successful programs such as our [Leading Forward](#) class. This year’s review will lead to several initiatives, including addressing Safety Action Plans and Housekeeping specifically during Close Out meetings with management, printed leave behinds that can serve as templates for creation of a Safety Action Plan, reporting and tracking of safety concerns and other resources, and the commitment to continued support provided via follow up meetings throughout the next year or two.”

An [SCA](#) is conducted onsite by a team of SLSI professionals and combines an online employee survey, onsite employee interviews, safety documents reviews, and field observations.

At the conclusion of the SCA, railroad management will receive an in-depth evaluation of performance on their railroad, reviewed using the Ten Core Elements of a Strong Safety Culture, as adopted by the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Safety Council. In addition, the SLSI team will provide resources and tools to address areas of opportunity on the railroad.

An SCA is voluntary, non-punitive, confidential, and free of charge to short line, regional, passenger, historic, tourist, and commuter railroads. To schedule, contact [slsi@shortlinesafety.org](mailto:slsi@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](http://www.shortlinesafety.org), [@shortlinesafety](#), [LinkedIn](#)