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SLSI Review of Safety Culture Assessments Drives Development of New Offerings in 2026

WASHINGTON – August 26, 2026 – The [Short Line Safety Institute](http://www.shortlinesafety.org) (SLSI) has released the annual Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) research [results paper](#) analyzing the eighteen Safety Culture Assessments (SCAs) conducted on short line, regional, passenger, commuter historic, and tourist railroads in 2025. The industry needs identified during the annual systematic review guide the development of tools, programs and training to assist the short line industry in elevating safety culture on railroads.

Across the SCAs conducted in 2025, the annual frequency analysis indicates several areas of strength, namely that railroad employees feel comfortable identifying and addressing safety concerns to both colleagues and management. Additionally, management supports employees by being present in the field, and employees feel empowered to choose the safest course of work.

“Like short line railroads, SLSI team members are committed to providing excellent service to our clients.” said Tom Murta, Executive Director, SLSI. “In addition to offering tools and programs that help SCA participants address areas of opportunity, SLSI provides technical assistance to help short lines solve both systemic and specific challenges. We also provide

follow-up coaching and check-ins, adding an extra layer of accountability and support. We look forward to introducing several new tools in the coming year to address tracking and reporting systems for safety concerns.”

Specifically, the July 2026 report identified the following areas of strength as measured by the Ten Core Elements of a Strong Safety Culture:

- Helping Coworkers: Employees are consistently willing to assist each other in understanding and performing safety-related work tasks.
- Approaching Management with Safety Concerns: Employees feel comfortable communicating safety related issues/concerns.
- Employee Empowerment: Employees feel empowered to work safely.
- Provision of PPE: Railroads provide PPE to employees as needed and it is readily available.
- Leadership/Management Field Presence: Senior leadership and management members are often seen in the field.

Approaching Management with Safety Concerns and Provision of PPE has been in the top strengths identified in each of the last four years, showing continued strong commitment across the industry to those Core Elements of Safety Culture.

Through the Systematic Review, SLSI also reviews trending opportunities for improvement, and addresses those opportunities with tools and training. These resources are provided to a participating railroad after an SCA to assist in improving in identified areas of opportunity.

Across the eighteen SCAs conducted in 2025, opportunities for improvement include:

- System for Reporting Safety Concerns/Resolutions: Some railroads could improve their systems for reporting employee concerns and resolutions to these concerns.
- Housekeeping: The organization or maintenance of the facilities and property at some railroads could be improved.
- Safety Action Plan (SAP): Some railroads could benefit from the creation of a safety action plan or make improvements to or better communicate an existing one.

- 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.
- Safety Vision: Some railroads could create a safety vision or better communicate an existing one.

In 2025, webinars and downloadable template programs were developed and provided to assist railroads in creating SAPs and clearly communicating a Safety Vision. Checklists and training videos have been made available [on the SLSI website](#) to assist in maintaining organized and safe facilities across railroad properties to address the Housekeeping opportunity.

“Our process for measuring safety culture is the most [comprehensive and robust](#) in the railroad industry. Analyzing the areas of opportunity across SCAs conducted each year, and identifying trending areas for improvement guides the development of programs and resources to address areas of opportunity,” said Sam Cotton, Director of Safety Culture Programs, SLSI.

To schedule an SCA, contact 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, [@shortlinesafety](#), [LinkedIn](#)