

SOFA Safety Campaign Action Plan

Status as of 9/20/00

Background: On September 9, 2000, a Burlington Northern Santa Fe switch foreman with 27 years of service was killed during switching operations at Keokuk, Iowa. So far this year, ten lives have been lost in railroad switching operations. This figure exceeds the 1999 total. As a result the Administrator has required that urgent remedial action be undertaken by rail labor and management which will include the forwarding of action plans to her by September 22. At the same time she has directed the Office of Safety to immediately implement a program to improve railroad employee knowledge, understanding and compliance with the "five SOFA lifesavers."

On September 14, 2000, at the fifteenth meeting of the Railroad Safety Advisory Committee (RSAC), the Administrator and the RSAC members by voice vote agreed to a declaration in which the railroad community committed itself to initiate an unprecedented sustained safety campaign on the crisis situation responsible for causing deaths and injuries during switching operations. The declaration underscores the railroad community's commitment to zero tolerance. The campaign includes:

- 1. An immediate assessment of the switching operations environment and its risks through increased observations and audits with participation by labor, management and FRA.**
- 2. An increased commitment by managers and employees to communicate the message and instill the sense of urgency for change.**
- 3. A defined plan to address safety risks built upon the Switching Operations Fatality Analysis report, and the "Five Lifesavers."**
- 4. Direct communication to all employees and their families outlining the crisis and asking for their help in correcting the problem to eliminate these deaths and injuries.**

The SOFA Action Plan was developed using the SOFA Declaration, the Office of Safety's Issue Paper and the August 30, 2000 letter. **(Tab A)**

Submissions/Action Plans have been received from: ASLRA, CANAC, AAR, BNSF, NS, CSX, KCS, UP, CN and METRA. CN and METRA will submit plans by Friday. **The Office of Safety is in the process of reviewing the submissions and will be contacting the railroads for further information and refinement of their plans (Tab B)**

23 signatures were included on the SOFA declaration on 9/14/00. Since that date, one additional signature has been submitted. **(Tab C)**

SOFA Safety Campaign Action Plan

9/20/00

Action Item 1: An immediate assessment of the switching operations environment and its risks through increased observations and audits with participation by labor, management and FRA.

- A. **Establish a special task force to review operating practices at those locations which have experienced the largest percentage of incidents related to switching operations**, for example, Cook County, Illinois; Harris County, Texas; and Albany County, New York. **(From August 30, 2000 Dear Colleague letter)**
Responsibility: Regional Administrators, Regions 1, 4 and 5.
Methods and Procedures: Increase Operating Practices (OP) Inspector presence at those locations to intensify observations and discussions related to the safety and operating rules applicable to the SOFA lifesavers. OP Inspectors will identify questionable practices and utilize the SACP process to develop and implement remedial action that will minimize the impact of human factors as a cause in accidents/incidents and thereby improve the safety of employees. Specifically, Operating Practices inspectors will:
- Talk to train engine and yard (TE&Y) crews and officials about safety issues that specifically focus on the ten employee deaths, the applicable SOFA lifesavers, the operating and safety rules applicable to the incident, other the causes of accidents/injuries at the specific location, and other safety issues, such as fatigue, that may also be related to the accidents/incidents;
- Conduct on board inspections on locals, yard assignments, industrial switchers, and road freight trains with particular focus on the operating and safety rules associated with the SOFA recommendations and other rules related to the causes of accidents/injuries at that location;
- Examine operational test program data at the specific location to determine implementation quality, and the relevance of the tests conducted to the causes of accidents/ injuries at that location and the SOFA lifesavers;
- Conduct operational tests with railroad officials to assess the quality of tests conducted and compliance with establish test procedures;
- Review operational test results to compare carrier official failure rates with those found by FRA operating practices inspectors. Emphasize those tests related to operating and safety rules associated with accident/injury causes and SOFA recommendations; and
- Utilize SACP principles to develop a safety issue action plan to address the concerns identified at the specific location.
Schedule: To be established.
- A. **On each SACP, establish a joint FRA/rail labor/management team to thoroughly review each of the incidents on the respective properties, and develop an Action Plan to insure implementation of the SOFA lifesavers. (From Issue Paper)**
Responsibility: SACP Program Managers.
Methods and Procedures: Work with appropriate contacts to develop the required plan.
Schedule: To be established.

Action Item 2. An increased commitment by managers and employees to communicate the message and instill the sense of urgency for change.

- A. **Issue an Emergency Safety Advisory that describes the circumstances surrounding each of the ten**

fatalities and all of the SOFA recommendations applicable to each of those incidents. The Advisory includes the RSAC Declaration. (From Issue Paper)

Responsibility: RRS-11 (D. Yachechak/D. Kasminoff)

Methods and Procedures: Draft Safety Advisory in consultation with RCC.

Schedule: Finalize Tuesday, September 13. Release Wednesday, September 14.

B. Insure prompt distribution of the safety advisory to each railroad employee via appropriate rail labor/management communication processes. (From Issue Paper)

Responsibility: RRS-11 (J. Gallant)

Methods and Procedures: Work with rail labor, rail management and the AAR to determine the most effective distribution procedure.

Schedule: Procedures in place prior to release of safety advisory.

A. Monitor and verify an increased commitment by managers and employees to communicate the message and instill the sense of urgency for change. (From RSAC Declaration)

Responsibility: Regional Administrators

Methods and Procedures: Verification by FRA personnel during on-site inspections.

Schedule: On going with a report on findings due weekly.

Action Item 3: A defined plan to address safety risks built upon the Switching Operations Fatality Analysis report, and the “Five Lifesavers.”

A. Monitor/participate in the development of a defined plan to address safety risks built on the Switching Operations Fatality Analysis (SOFA) report and the “Five SOFA Lifesavers.” (From RSAC Declaration)

Responsibility: Regional Administrators

Methods and Procedures: Coordinate with rail labor and management

Schedule: Ongoing with status report due weekly.

A. Provide Administrator with bi-weekly updates on the SOFA safety campaign status.

Responsibility: RRS-11, D. Taylor

Methods and Procedures: Prepare report based on data from Regional Administrators

Schedule: Ongoing.

A. Review the action plans developed by rail labor and management, as requested by the Administrator, and advise responders of any necessary revisions and/or additional submissions. (From Issue Paper and RSAC Declaration)

Responsibility: RRS-11, D. Taylor, J. Gallant. (Scott Kaye)

Methods and Procedures: Develop monitoring procedures, coordinate pertinent information with concerned parties, e.g., Regional Administrators, SACP Program Managers, etc.

Schedule: Ongoing.

Action Item 4. Direct communication to all employees and their families outlining the crisis and asking for their help in correcting the problem to eliminate these deaths and injuries.

A. Item: Monitor and verify the railroad/labor direct communication to all employees and their families outlining the crisis and asking for their help in correcting the problem to eliminate these deaths and injuries. (From RSAC Declaration)

Responsibility: Regional Administrators

Methods and Procedures: Verification by FRA personnel.

Schedule: On-going with a report on findings due weekly.

