

## Why is safety participation important?

Our safety summit agreement was signed in 2002 to introduce a new approach to discipline that stresses training and counseling instead of punitive discipline. It also introduced a new safety culture that focuses on the active participation of employees, managers and union leadership to create a safer workplace and focus as a team on safety. In the past, safety programs were only supported by Carrier policy, not an agreement. When management philosophy changed or budgets were cut, the safety programs and union employees suffered. This agreement creates union appointed positions at the terminal level to address safety issues as well as represent their fellow members at the local safety meetings as well as the ability to escalate issues to the division level with the General manager. These positions are key to identifying safety hazards and trends that put workers in danger and communicate those hazards through the reporting process as well as communication through the work group as a whole. They are selected to represent by the local unions and are people that are better trusted to take care of a safety issue than a manager or someone who doesn't have the same connection or experience as the workgroup itself. These people don't simply attend a meeting occasionally to check a box, they are responsible for many aspects of safety within their respective terminal.

Some of these items include:

- Local Emergency Response plan review
- Division reviews/ van audits
- Facility/ Industry audits
- Seasonal action plan reviews
  - Winter
  - Summer
  - Wildfire
- SIRP overview (closed loop/ escalation)
- Marathons/ safety briefings/ safety recognition
- Approaching others/ peer to peer safety interactions
- Terminal safety newsletter
- Cross craft/ cross terminal interactions/ communication
- Stand downs on active trends/ initiative task force
- New hire safety orientation
- Attend terminal/ division safety meetings

People in these positions face challenges as many of us do in dealing with changes creating risk and overall workplace culture but they are a voice for you and work to improve the workplace for you. Our agreement gives you a voice and representation, it's important to protect our agreements but also to utilize them for our benefit to the fullest extent possible. As the saying goes, you can either be at the table or on the table. It is important to have representation at every level to make the workplace safer for you. Some of the things you will lose by not

participating can seem unimportant until it happens to you, the person who gets injured ultimately pays the highest price for the injury, from simply lost time to potentially life altering consequences. Also, the loss of Alternative handling for rules violations, the management has a policy for locations not participating in safety, the Risk Reduction Education process, it is up to them whether they offer this to an employee or not, there is no agreement backing it, it is simply a policy and subject to change to suit and benefit the Carrier. What this means to you is simply on a whim you could be offered RRE or not, do you have a target on your back? Did you do speak up? Are you the Trainmaster's Son in law? With RRE the outcome of an incident could greatly differ and would not be backed by the Alternative handling clause in our Safety Summit agreement. Currently we are seeing a dramatic increase of employees required to serve time for various infractions, if they are denied Alternative handling we can use our agreement where we are participating to minimize these impacts. In some instances, we can arbitrate the denial of Alternative handling and we have had great success in these efforts. Think long and hard about this choice, who ultimately benefits when we are not at the table exercising our agreements to protect our people? Standing united and utilizing every avenue available to us is how we will improve our workplace.