



SOFA

Switching Fatalities – Understanding and Prevention Railroad Industry Senior Leadership Meeting



Coupled Together – Moving Toward “Zero Fatalities”
May 2011



SWG Key Objectives

SWG key objectives – Working Together to:

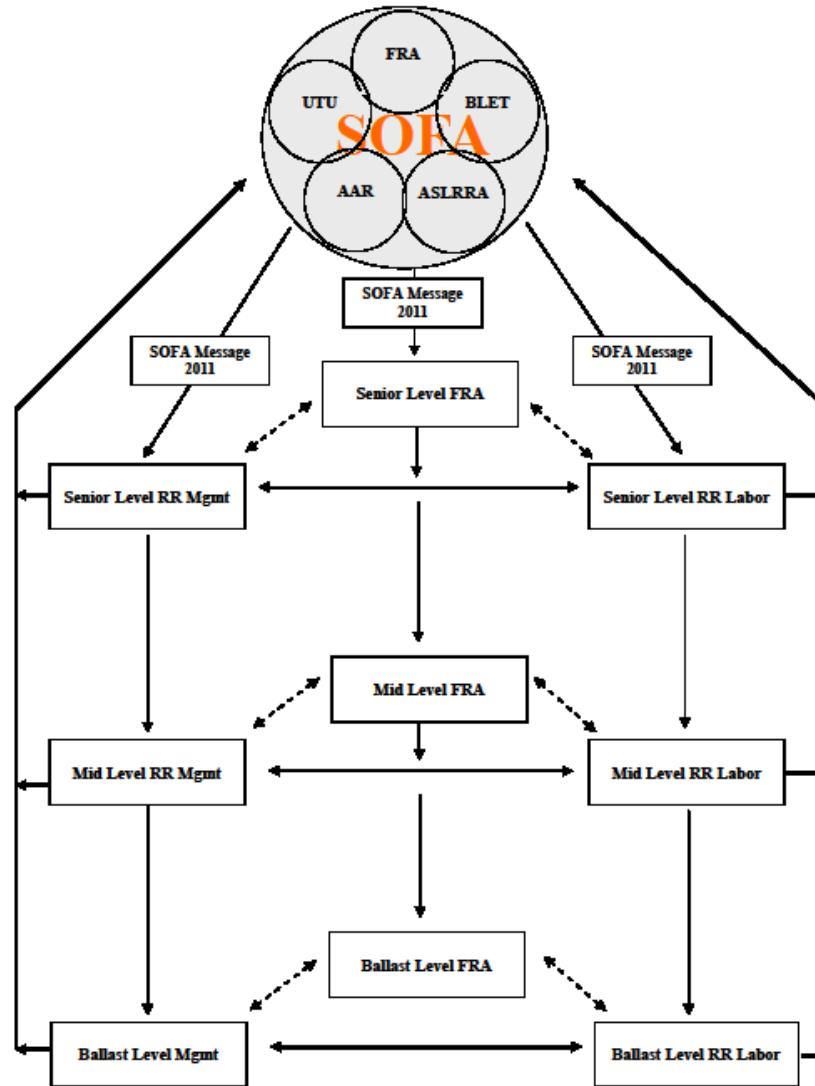
- Use the SOFA Report as an educational tool
- Encourage non-punitive, voluntary, collaborative efforts
- Increase ballast-level awareness of the causes of switching operations fatalities.



SOFA Communications Strategy

"Goal is ZERO Switching Fatalities."

SOFA Audience Communications Strategy





Why SOFA Advisories?

SOFA Classification	Description	Total
SOFA5 – SA1	FE had 1.5 years of experience or less or had inadequate training.	32
SSHCC – SA2	Special Switching Hazard: Close Clearance.	29
SSHIH – SA3	Special Switching Hazard: Industrial Hazard.	26
SOFA3 – SA4	Lack of or inadequate job safety briefing.	23
SSHST – SA5	Special Switching Hazard: Struck by Mainline Train.	20



SOFA Safety Advisory Statements

SA-1 Inexperienced Employee (SOFA5) SOFA Safety Advisory

Since the 1999 SOFA Report, the SWG emphasis on mentoring has not achieved a substantial reduction in SOFA 5 (Inexperienced Employee) fatalities.

- Critical for the railroad industry to provide the inexperienced employee adequate On-the-Job-Training (OJT).
- Without abandoning the commitment to mentoring, the railroad industry should improve OJT to include targeted training for the inexperienced employee. Providing follow-up review of skills, and targeted training by the railroad industry enables an inexperienced employee to meet the demands of the job.
- Smaller railroads in particular may benefit from a review of their OJT, and improved follow-up with inexperienced employees.



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SOFA Safety Advisory Statements

SA-2 Close Clearance SOFA Safety Advisory

Removing the hazard is the best way to address close/no clearances. Yet, in many cases a close/no clearance condition will not be able to be eliminated.

- Proper signage should be implemented and be instructive to the employee. The sign should be an appropriate distance from the close/no clearance location and on the same side.
- Signage must (a) announce the clearance issue and (b) instruct the employee who is controlling the movement to dismount and remain dismounted from the equipment while passing the close/no clearance location.
- One method to determine the signage design, appropriate distance, and position may be to organize a management-labor working group.



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SOFA Safety Advisory Statements

SA-3 Industrial Hazards SOFA Safety Advisory

Railroads and industries need to have Industry Track Agreements, practices, or policies in place, and these should contain oversight and enforcement of the safety provisions. Railroads must provide employees with the tools and/or assistance to allow them to safely perform their work while within an industry.

- Employees need to be empowered to make a decision to stop work when an unsafe condition presents itself. Railroad managers must be educated to encourage employees to make a good faith effort to identify and report hazards at industries. Employees making a good faith effort to identify and report hazards will not be subject to discipline, discrimination, or harassment for doing so.
- Employees engaged in switching operations must not ride railroad equipment through a grade crossing during a shove movement. Industries need to educate and instruct all vehicle operators concerning separation between their vehicle and railroad equipment by being attentive to movements in the industry.



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SOFA Safety Advisory Statements

SA-4 Job or Safety Briefings (SOFA3) SOFA Safety Advisory

Ongoing communication is crucial among employees during the entire time switching operations are being performed, including periods when tasks are changing or when anomalies occur.

A job briefing is a two-way exchange of information to reach an understanding of the tasks being performed.

- More than half of SOFA 3 (Job Briefings) fatalities in yards occurred when a job task changed and an update to the job briefing did not occur.
- More progress can be made in the area of work changes. When work changes occur, the employees involved may not maintain currency with these changes; thus, they may be unaware of the tasks to be performed, and this may place them in peril.
- RR industry must remain vigilant regarding fatalities, and when work changes occur, employees must regroup, take appropriate steps to provide protection, and not proceed until an update to the job briefing is done.



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SOFA Safety Advisory Statements

SA-5 Struck By Mainline Train SOFA Safety Advisory

Communication is essential to eliminating fatalities. Fatalities occur when employees are unaware of risks associated with doing work along mainline track, particularly during darkness and winter months.

- Insist upon consistent use of multiple methods to warn employees about oncoming on-track movements.
 - Warnings should be made to the approaching on-track movement of an employee's location when a crew member is outside of the locomotive cab.
 - Consider improving employee visibility when performing work on the ground.
- Use job briefing procedures before locomotive dismount or work along mainline track to establish a safe method for performing work.
 - When possible, employees must dismount to the safe side.
- Empower employees to establish a safe location when stopping and/or performing work when on or near mainline track.
 - The RR industry must support employees in the use of individual discretion as part of an effort to determine a safe location to perform work.



Additional SOFA Information

- SOFA is not a part of the RSAC process used by the FRA and railroads to propose and make rules.

- 2011 SOFA report is on the FRA website at:

<http://www.fra.dot.gov/> - just click on



- This SOFA presentation will be posted on the FRA website at: <http://www.fra.dot.gov/> - just click on





What's Next?

You heard from us, we need to hear from you:

- If implementation of 2011 SOFA Advisories is to be successful, what kinds of actions would be necessary?
- Where does your organization see opportunities to positively present the 2011 SOFA Advisory message?
- What are some next steps, working collaboratively, to implement the 2011 SOFA Advisories?
- What role does the SOFA Working Group play?
- Are there other issues or concerns?



Thank You
- Your Comments
- Your Questions



The Goal is “Zero Fatalities”