



a BST case study



SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS AT UNION PACIFIC

*Reducing injuries and improving culture
within the San Antonio Service Unit*

Located just south of San Antonio is the headquarters of Union Pacific Railroad's San Antonio Service Unit (SASU). The service unit is responsible for operating freight trains from Alpine in West Texas to Eagle Lake in the east, and from Hearne in the north to the Mexican border at Laredo in the south, a combined distance of over 800 miles. Nearly 1,000 employees operate the service unit with most serving as engineers and conductors who are responsible for safe train movement.

In December 2004 the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), BST, and Union Pacific Management and union leaders met in San Antonio to discuss a pilot project. As a result of recent collisions and major derailments the FRA was willing to sponsor a Leading with Safety® initiative at the service unit. The project contained three main elements and was initially designed to improve what Union Pacific identifies as Cab Red Zone performance in road operations. Cab Red Zone is a time frame that requires increased vigilance from the crew while operating a train. For example, when a train approaches a section of track occupied by a repair crew, this situation requires the activation of Cab Red Zone. This state of high vigilance is similar to what airline pilots use during taking off and landing.

Leading with Safety

Union Pacific has long been an advocate in safety and uses the term Total Safety Culture as a way of describing how they think about safety, so they were very receptive to the FRA offer. The first element of the Leading with Safety project focused on aligning Union Pacific's senior leaders to support safety, using assessment, development, coaching, and training activities. The second phase of the project engaged first-level



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At a Glance:

- The San Antonio Service Unit includes 1,000 employees who cover 800 miles
- Implemented the Leading with Safety approach in 2004, engaging employees from senior leaders through managers to labor
- The front-line employee element is named CAB for *Changing At-risk Behavior*
- Reduced Cab Red Zone failures by 50%
- From 2006 to 2007, the unit reduced personal injuries by 20%
- By 2008, the unit had reduced personal injuries an additional 33%

managers in safety, primarily by developing leadership skills that would support their role as safety leaders. BST delivered a leadership assessment for each manager and conducted focused development workshops around critical skills such as communications and improving trust. The final element of the project was to engage Union Pacific employees in capturing data on exposures. BST implemented a BAPP® system, which the labor steering committee named *Changing At-risk Behavior* (CAB).



The CAB Process uses peer-to-peer observations to capture data on exposures, helping the process identify and remedy hazards before they lead to injury.

In early 2005, Union Pacific selected a steering committee and two facilitators to lead the CAB process. The selections reflected the diverse population and union representation at Union Pacific, San Antonio. Half the committee and one facilitator came from the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET). The remaining committee members and facilitator came from the United Transportation Union (UTU). Leadership at both unions were extremely supportive of the process. Vice general chairmen **John Dunn** (UTU) and **Russell Elly** (BLET) provided the critical leadership support that allowed the project to get off the ground. Similarly, the general superintendent **Shane Keller** and general director of operating practices **Mike Mitchell** showed their interest by becoming early leaders in the project. These four leaders recognized it as not only an opportunity to improve safety, but also to improve the relationship between labor and management.

The facilitators, **Mike Byars** and **Kelvin Philips**, met with BST consultant **George Wollard** and the newly named steering committee and began the BAPP implementation. The first data sheet was focused on train operations with a mind to expand to yard operations later in time. The new process encountered some resistance in the beginning, however, slowly but surely they have made inroads and gained employee confidence.



Facilitators Kelvin Philips and Mike Byars.

Results

To date, the CAB process has been operating for close to three years and has produced some encouraging improvements in culture, injuries, and safe operating practices.

Reductions in Cab Red Zone Failures • Union Pacific uses a monitoring program called the Field Training Exercise (FTX) to determine adherence to the Cab Red Zone (CRZ) process and other rule requirements. FTX requires

manager to observe employees operating in a variety of work situations and document the results.

FTX observations of CRZ requirements show nearly a 50% reduction in failures. Additionally, there was only one derailment during the period of the implementation related to Cab Red Zone. Maybe

most notable is the opinion of employees and managers that labor/management relations have improved significantly. **Mike Mitchell**, original management sponsor, says “I believe a large share of credit belongs with local leadership of both organizations (unions) who overcame huge obstacles to make this a successful effort. I am happy to consider senior leadership of both general committees are friends of mine . . . In my entire railroad career . . . of slightly over 40 years, I had never seen the cooperation between labor and management that I had the pleasure of working with in conjunction with the CAB process.”

Shifts in Culture • Since September 2006, general superintendent **Brian Gorton** has been responsible for the service unit. He says that the process has demonstrated that both unions and management can work together on safety improvement and that the key is that the steering committee themselves train employees. Previous efforts relied on management or top-down training approaches. The CAB process, in contrast, is owned and led by the operating people who know the job best. With the rotation of the steering committee and facilitators, Gorton has received over 30 applications for the positions, demonstrating the high interest in the process.

Reductions in Personal Injuries • Gorton also reports that between 2006 to 2007 there was a 20% reduction in personal injuries, and between 2007 to 2008 there has been a 33% reduction. Further, derailments are down 38%, decertifications 70%, and lost

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The San Antonio Service Unit Headquarters.

work days 40%. Gorton describes the process as a long-term success and is self sustaining with the ownership and dedication of both employees and Union Pacific management.

Process Expansion

CAB has expanded since its original inception to yard operations and now covers all employees at SASU. Most of the original committee has rotated off and have been replaced with new members, but the energy for the work has not fallen. The committee trains new observers at an admirable pace and plans on having all of the 1,000 employees trained by early 2009. By the end of October both facilitators will have also rotated off, but plan to continue their role as advocates of the process Mike Byars described

Recognition:

- In 2008 the Department of Transportation awarded the San Antonio Service Unit the *Distinguished Public Service Award* in recognition of the unit's achievements in safety.

some of the challenges to the process as, "The geographic size of the service unit is a challenge. We don't all work under one roof. There was quite a bit of fear about the use of the data. People were concerned that it would be used to cut jobs or fire people. There is a long history (140 years) of management and labor having an adversarial relationship, i.e. *If it's good for the railroad then it's bad for us*, or vice versa. We had to educate management as well as labor that this is not a quick fix. It will take a long time to get the results we are looking for . . . cultural change."

Clear Signal for Action

As the CAB process works toward its fourth year, Union Pacific is beginning to enjoy outside recognition for its efforts. In June 2008, FRA Administrator **Joseph Boardman** invited the managers and employees from Union Pacific Railroad's San Antonio Service Unit (SASU) to Washington to receive the Department of Transportation's Distinguished Public Service Award. Fellow recipients included sister site, the Livonia Service Unit (LVSU), based near Baton Rouge. Like SASU, LVSU is also a BST client site. The LVSU process, known as STEEL, was launched a year after San Antonio with help from BST consultant **Jay Finney**.

Boardman commended the United Transportation Union, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, and Union Pacific Railroad for their partnership in both locations. Working together, these groups helped CAB achieve an 80% reduction in at-risk behaviors and STEEL remove more than 75 barriers to safety .

The two projects represent an encouraging approach to the rail road industry and have convinced the FRA that other rail roads that want to pursue a similar approach will have their support. FRA has termed these types of programs as CSA, or *Clear Signal for Action*.



The CAB Steering Team from left to right: John Dunn, Mike Araujo, Carl Eddington, Michael Byars, Andy Wright, Chad Jistel, Oscar Mayfield, and Kelvin Philips.



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