



Safety is the Key to Success
Communication is the key to safety

Geneva, NY – Safety and communication in the railroad industry go hand in hand. This message became the safety slogan among local emergency response teams who were trained in rail emergency response at the Ontario County Safety Training Facility on August 13 which was sponsored by a local shortline railroad, Finger Lakes Railway.

The 3-hr classroom training for 25 local volunteer fire fighters and hazardous material team members was presented by Evan Eisenhandler, Executive Director for New York State Operation Lifesaver. Operation Lifesaver Inc. (OLI) is a national non-profit organization focused on promoting the message of rail safety regarding grade crossings and in trespassing situations, but it also focuses on training first responders and police officers on how to evaluate and process incidents involving rail property, staff, equipment and locomotives.

Through a series of videos and a PowerPoint presentation, attendees learned the unique degree to which railroads are different than a typical emergency response situation. When responding to an incident involving the train or the railroad tracks, responders must take extra caution to not only protect the public from further danger, but to protect themselves from harm. “When responding to an incident involving the railroad, always call the railroad dispatcher,” said Eisenhandler. “That is the first and foremost lesson you should take home with you today.” Communication with the railroad staff will establish the proper safety protocol when dealing with a rail incident.



Finger Lakes Railway staff, Karl Henry, Safety Officer, Craig Holden, Transportation Manager and Kayla Gottobed, Assistant Rail Clerk and OLI volunteer, attended the events to answer questions and reinforce the message.

“We want to work with all our local emergency responders,” said Henry. “The more they know, the more effective they will be if an emergency ever occurs.” Grade crossings incidents with vehicles, trespassing or major derailments are



the main reasons first responders report to tracks in their area. While this training had a focus on hazardous material handling procedures for railroads, emergency responders first learned about the mechanics of locomotives and rail operations so that they could create a response plan that appropriately dealt with any situation.

The event was organized by Dan Speers, Ontario County Deputy Fire Coordinator. Responders from Penn Yan, Canandaigua, Ontario County Emergency Management Dept, Geneva, Oaks Corners, Dresden, Pultneyville, Naples, White Springs, Bristol, Victor-Farmington, and Border City attended. Finger Lakes Railway sponsored the classroom training event as well as the follow up field experience on Saturday, August 15 where responders put their training into action.



Responders learn about the safety features of tank cars.



Responders learn about the safety features of locomotives.



Emergency Response HazMat Teams prepare for tactical approach.



Finger Lakes Staff: Karl Henry, Craig Holden, Kayla Gottobed

About Finger Lakes Railway Corp.

Finger Lakes Railway Corp. is a Class III railroad that operates on 167 miles of track from its Geneva headquarters. They operate in 6 counties in the Finger Lakes region including Ontario, Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Yates, and Schuyler. Their current customer base has grown to 89 active shippers. FGLK connects with CSX, Norfolk Southern, Canadian Pacific, and New York Susquehanna Railroads. Since they began operations in 1995, they have added 55 full time employees and now have 14 locomotives. They also currently lease 581 railcars to better serve their customers needs. For more information visit www.fingerlakesrail.com

About Operation Lifesaver, Inc.

Operation Lifesaver has a network of authorized volunteer speakers and trained instructors who offer free rail safety education programs in all fifty states. Volunteers speak to school groups, driver education classes, community audiences, professional drivers, law enforcement officers, and emergency responders. Programs are co-sponsored by federal, state and local government agencies, highway safety organizations and America's railroads. Together they promote the three E's - education, enforcement and engineering - to keep people safe around the tracks and railway crossings within our communities.

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