

REACT pilot project: Reacting to community need for training

When rail accidents happen, CN's industry-leading emergency response measures help ensure our response is swift and effective. Thanks to an innovative CN-designed and funded program, many rural responders in British Columbia are now better prepared, too.



Matthew Clarabut
Terrace Fire Department

"We can count on more collaboration between local communities in the event of a rail accident, because their fire departments have also taken REACT," explains Peter Weeber, Terrace, B.C., fire chief.

An initiative of CN's Dangerous Goods team, the *Responder Education Assistance and Certification Training* (REACT) is a program that teaches how to deal effectively with a rail incident involving dangerous goods. REACT aims to train community-based rural responders, people who are first on an accident scene, such as the many fire and rescue professionals in B.C. who benefited from REACT's pilot project.

Providing much-needed training

Equally important, responders learn how to integrate their emergency response process with CN's, to quickly bring an incident under control. Conducted in three phases, REACT offers the critical training which many rural responders are unable to obtain because of budget or time constraints.

"Project REACT is a smart way to invest in the safe and secure transport of dangerous goods by rail," says **Danny Simpson**, assistant vice-president, Safety and Environment. "It fosters open communication and builds partnerships with local communities resulting in better emergency preparedness and planning all around."



Jeff Minhinnick, from the Terrace Fire Department (TFD), navigates his way through Phase I of the online training.

Quick Facts about the REACT pilot in B.C.:

- REACT stands for: *Responder Education Assistance and Certification Training*.
- REACT was offered to 120 municipal responders from 36 communities in British Columbia.
- REACT provided rural B.C.'s responders with the first comprehensive training to handle rail incidents involving dangerous goods.
- REACT was developed and entirely funded by CN and is unique to North America.
- REACT trained responders through a comprehensive three-stage training program comprising theory and practice on dangerous goods emergency response.
- REACT-trained course graduates meet the world's only recognized HAZMAT competency standard at the operations-level: the *National Fire Protection Association* standard *NFPA 472*.

Phase I Easy-access online training

First, rural responders follow an interactive on-line course about dangerous goods and how to respond to rail incidents involving them. CN partnered with an outside firm to bring the theoretical course to responders. The training can be conveniently followed from the participant's home or anywhere there is an Internet connection.

Phase II Putting theory into practice

Phase two gives responders the opportunity to put theory into practice at one of six locations or hubs across the province. During the two-day class, responders learn such things as how to recognize dangerous goods and secure an accident site. They are given an overview of the delicate management of a rail incident, from using protective HAZMAT clothing to operating specialized equipment such as gas detectors.

In addition, they learn how to effectively function in an incident command structure during an accident, including how to integrate with CN emergency personnel at the command and operational levels. A few simulated incidents are also staged during the training to give responders some practical experience.

Phase III On-site training

In phase three, responders return to a hub site to take CN's *Railroad Emergency Response* course, which includes a review of CN's emergency plan and regulations related to dangerous goods emergency response.



Left to right
Matthew Clarabut (TFD),
Colin Willoner (TFD),
Tim Tokarchuck (CN) and
Bill Warcup (TFD).



Bill Warcup (TFD) with fire chief,
Peter Weeber (right).



CN's Dangerous Goods Team receives the RAC Safety Award
Jean Ouellette (left), senior manager, Dangerous Goods and Paul C. Miller, Chief Safety and Transportation Officer, receive the Railway Association of Canada's Safety Award in recognition of CN's contribution to safe transportation.

A positive REACTION

- In October 2008, CN won a 2008 B.C. Lieutenant Governor's Award for Public Safety for showing exceptional leadership, achievement and innovation in the promotion of safety in British Columbia.
- Also this past October, CN received the Railway Association of Canada's annual Safety Award for adopting better working and operating practices in safe transportation.
- In a letter to CN in May 2008, the B.C. regional office of the Canadian Chemical Producers' Association commended CN for its initiative in developing and offering REACT as important support for Responsible Care® and TransCAER efforts.

Terrace, B.C., firefighters learn the ropes

Bill Danks and **Art Vesterfelt**, CN Dangerous Goods officers, delivered the course together in June 2008 at the hub in Terrace, B.C. "Because it was new and involved a considerable investment of responders' time," says Bill, "we had to convince some municipalities that it was worth their while. Once people saw the quality and usefulness of the training they quickly became big supporters."

Peter Weeber, fire chief for the city of Terrace, B.C., who participated in REACT, says the benefits of the program go far beyond the quality training. "REACT helped to build bridges. Our relationship with CN is now rock solid because we have a better understanding of how to work together in a rail emergency," observes Peter.

Jason Arsenault, a firefighter on Peter's team, says being able to apply the training in a practical setting was the most valuable part of the program. "I liked the mock derailments because they put our team to the test. I certainly feel much better prepared should a real rail emergency ever arise," confirms Jason. "There's nothing like REACT anywhere else in the industry or the country," adds Bill.

Response to the REACT program has been so positive its future looks bright. "The dangerous goods team is very proud to have developed this initiative and we hope to offer it to other rural communities system wide," says **Jean Ouellette**, senior manager, Dangerous Goods, who was closely involved in REACT's design and implementation. "After we assess all the feedback from the pilot we'll be looking for ways to make the program even better."

