



American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association

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ASLRRRA Awards 2023 Safety Person and Safety Professional of the Year *Individual Safety Awards Honor Career Dedication to Railroad Safety*

NEW ORLEANS, April 3, 2023 - The American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association is pleased to honor Raul Guerrero, a track inspector at the Texas North Western Railway (TXNW), as the Association's Safety Person of the Year, and Austin Milton, Director, Safety & Training, The Indiana Rail Road Company (INRD), as the Safety Professional of the Year. These awards recognize a career-long safety focus and honor leaders who hold their companies and their peers accountable to and for each other. ASLRRRA recognized both individuals for their decades-long dedication to railroad safety at its Annual Conference & Exhibition in New Orleans, Louisiana this morning.

"Safety is priority number one in the short line industry," said ASLRRRA President Chuck Baker. "Raul Guerrero of TXNW and Austin Milton of INRD live that priority every day, driving their fellow railroaders to perform safely, day in and day out. Their behaviors influence and elevate safety culture on their respective railroads and in their communities, resulting in outstanding safety performance on their railroads. We are pleased to honor their decades of service to the industry."

Safety Person of the Year – Raul Guerrero, Track Inspector, Texas North Western Railway (TXNW)

According to TXNW Manager of Operating practices Chris Martin, the 2023 Safety Person of the Year honoree Raul Guerrero is “the most vocal employee about safety at TXNW.” Guerrero, who has fourteen and a half years of active railroad industry experience, is always looking for potentially unsafe conditions that need correction. This trait has helped TXNW realize important safety achievements.

Since January 2020, Guerrero has been a member of the Employee Safety Committee, a voluntary group comprising employees of parent company TNW Corporation who encourage safe practices at TNW’s three short line railways in Texas. The safety committee also acts as a voice for fellow employees, allowing them to share suggestions regarding safety initiatives.

In his primary role at TXNW, Guerrero is responsible for inspecting 165 miles of leads and tracks. His exemplary job performance has helped TXNW stay track-caused derailment free for over two years. According to Martin, Guerrero not only makes safety a priority at work, he demonstrates the importance of safety and safe practices outside of work as well.

Safety Professional of the Year – Austin Milton, Director, Safety & Training, The Indiana Rail Road Company (INRD)

Once, after training new employees all day, 2023 Safety Professional of the Year Austin Milton was en route to visit INRD’s car department when he spotted, from over 200 feet away, an employee making a critical safety error. Instead of passing by, Milton stopped and talked for over 20 minutes with the individual to provide clear and positive instruction to correct the behavior. This example of dedication to company safety is a common occurrence for Milton, whose tireless efforts to improve INRD’s safety culture are lauded by his colleagues at the railroad.

“Our safety success is due to the hard work and dedication of Austin and his personal commitment to being safe and making sure all INRD employees have the knowledge and the tools to work safe,” said INRD General Manager, Operations Peter Jespersen.

Through his role as director of safety and training, Milton has created an open environment wherein INRD employees feel empowered to speak out about any safety concerns they might have. Milton also engages employees in dialogue about pending rule changes or new regulatory requirements, helping them take ownership of the safety process. With department leaders, Milton works to address safety issues proactively instead of reacting to problems after they occur.

Milton is also focused on keeping those in the community safe. He works with local law enforcement, first responders and community leaders to improve their knowledge of rail safety. He coordinates with rail safety organization Operation Lifesaver to oversee the area’s Rail Safety Week initiatives, which include the Officer on a Train event, pedestrian and grade crossing safety blitzes and social media campaigns.

Thanks to Milton’s efforts, INRD has achieved several safety goals. This includes bringing INRD’s FRA personal injury frequency index and train accident rate to zero in 2022; instituting INRD’s “Keys for Driving Safety Success” program; improving INRD’s safety resources and materials; and developing critical work practices to improve the safety compliance of each field department. Milton has also worked with ASLRRA’s Safety and Training Committee to develop templates for compliance with 49 CFR Part 243, “Training, Qualification and Oversight for Safety-Related Railroad Employees.”

Milton got his start in railroading in 2008 before joining INRD in 2011 as a train operator. He rose to manager, safety and operating practices in 2017 before being promoted to his current position in 2022. His experiences in each of these company roles have helped Milton better assess INRD’s safety training and practices and develop solutions to improve them, both for new employees and seasoned professionals.

About ASLRRRA - The American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRRA) is a non-profit trade association representing the interests of the nation's 603 short line and regional railroads and railroad supply company members in legislative and regulatory matters. Short lines operate 47,500 miles of track in 49 states, or approximately 29% of the national railroad network, touching in origination or termination one out of every five cars moving on the national railroad system, serving customers who otherwise would be cut off from the national railroad network. www.aslrra.org