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## Saint John rail emergency exercise valuable for readiness

*Louis-Philippe Ethier, Technical Advisor*

The scenario? Two response teams simultaneously attending a “live” hazardous material transfer. The mission? Transfer the hazardous materials from tank cars to other tank cars or a tank truck, following ERAC’s policies and guidelines.

The rail event took place at Saint John Irving Bayshore facility on June 15, and was a multi-team live transfer exercise involving the flammable liquids and LPG response teams from RST Industries, the Sutherland Environmental LPG response team, and ERAC. The exercise evaluated the communications protocols between and amongst these teams in the face of an incident involving flammable liquids and gases; skills tested included planning, damage assessment, job hazard analysis, grounding and bounding, and transfer operations.



As a result of the evaluation conducted during the exercise, the following outcomes were noted:

- Given the high volume of information generated by the exercise, the establishment and maintenance of all forms of communications were well executed. The ERAC communication infrastructure and information management process allows us to deal with the exchange of large volume of information and many resources.
- While all participants developed their own action and safety plans, many of these plans could be strengthened with greater elaboration of their multi-team components.
- Access to current, accurate contact information for key local public emergency services and personnel needs to be improved.
- Greater attention needs to be paid to organisational structure and the training of public emergency services involved in supporting a response, to permit better collation, analysis and interpretation of available information.
- No single mode of communication proved adequate to all requirements. Multiple communications means must be available throughout an emergency response.

The rail event was described by all participants as being well coordinated, realistic and valuable as a test of a hazardous material incident. Participants believe that similar exercises should be scheduled regularly, ideally annually, involving local first responders.

During the day, participants had the chance to observe a demonstration of drone capability. They were also invited to visit the Railway Association of Canada’s “CCPX911” rail car, where Jean-Pierre Couture (RAC) and Yves Hamel (CN) provided participants a tour and Rail Car 101 overview. We thank Jean-Pierre and Yves for their dedication in making these events more valuable to participants.

Last, but not least, I personally want to thank Shawn Reilly of RST and his administrative team for making this event a great success.

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