

Safety under the summer sun



We are in the midst of the summer work season, facing the hazards and problems we face each year at this time. With high temperatures, high humidity and dry ground conditions affecting our workers, we must take the extra time and precautions to address these issues with our employees. These conditions can lead to expensive property damage in the way of grass/brush fires, overheating equipment and even track buckling. Our most valuable asset, our employees, must be given the knowledge and training to protect themselves and learn the signs of overheating, not only for themselves, but for their fellow employees.

Contractors, Class 1s, regionals, shortlines and rail transit agencies are hiring new employees every day. Safety awareness has to be at a high level at every worksite and it needs to be even higher with our new employees. We all have extensive training programs, but there is no better teacher than experience and experience takes time, so make sure to pay special attention to the safety habits of your newest employees.

While we focus on getting our work done safely, on time and on budget out in the field every day, I'm also pleased to announce that the NRC is investing in the next generation of rail industry leaders. We have recently made contributions to two outstanding rail education programs: the Michigan State Railway Management Program and the Michigan Tech University Rail Transportation Program.

Michigan State University's certificate course in railway management offers a comprehensive course designed to help railroad employees grow professionally and increase their management capabilities. For more information, visit: www.raileducation.com.

Michigan Technical University's Rail Transportation Program serves the rail industry by offering an interdisciplinary program in railroad engineering and urban rail transit that provides opportunities for students and faculty to participate in the development and operation of rail transportation for the 21st century. For more information, visit: www.rail.mtu.edu.

Our NRC staff in D.C. is still working away on the surface transportation reauthorization legislation. This legislation is very important to essentially all of our customers: rail transit agencies, streetcar systems, intercity passenger rail operators, freights railroads from the largest Class 1 to the smallest shortline and even ports. The NRC has written a letter to the congressmen and senators working on this legislation in Conference Committee focusing on our priorities, which include:

- Dedicated funding for the Section 130 Rail-Highway Grade Crossing Safety Program;
- Flexibility for State DOTs to invest in freight rail projects;
- Funding for the multimodal merit-based Projects of National & Regional Significance program;
- Provisions to expedite project delivery and streamline environmental permitting processes;
- Expansion of the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program;
- Maintaining the current truck size and weight limits;
- Improving the Railroad Rehabilitation & Improvement Financing (RRIF) loan program and
- Restoring parity between the pre-tax commuter benefits for parking and transit use.

If you'd like to also weigh in with your congressmen and senators directly (and I strongly encourage you to do so), you can do it very easily online at www.capwiz.com/nrcma.

Finally, save the date for the next NRC Conference, January 9-12, 2013, at the Loews Miami Beach Hotel in Miami, Fla. Registration information will be announced shortly in this column, via the NRC e-mail bulletin and online at www.nrcma.org/go/conference. I hope to see you there.

Work safe and keep those around you working safe.

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