

Safety Focus - The Final Stretch of 2014



With the final push to the railroad construction and maintenance summer work season coming quickly, a renewed focus and effort on safety is extremely important. While many of our member companies will have their backs against the wall to get larger than normal volumes of work completed in the time that remains, safety must remain paramount.

When employees start working longer days and more days out of each week, they can have a tendency to lose their focus. Adhering to safety best practices can sometimes become a little harder under this type of working condition. A fatigued employee can become an unsafe employee very quickly. It is extremely important that our managers, supervisors and project foremen be mindful and aware of this. Management must work a little harder to maintain a safe project site under such conditions, keeping their employees focused on being safe while maintaining production. Equipment upkeep also plays a pivotal role in the safety of our projects. Machines that are being worked harder and for longer periods of time need to be maintained properly and kept in good, safe working condition.

Safety on the railroad remains Priority #1 and it is everyone's responsibility to follow and adhere to the rules and regulations regarding safe practices. I would like to remind all of our member companies to stay focused and be safe while headed to the finish line this year!

The NRC is currently working on the next two safety training videos for distribution to our membership. These videos, #17 and #18 in our ongoing series, both pertain to grade crossing replacement. Video #17 will address the preparation and planning that goes into performing the work and Video #18 will focus on the actual work, the removal and installation of the new track, grade crossing, and roadway approaches. These videos will address the detailed planning, safe practices and procedures for doing this type of grade crossing work. I would like to thank Mr. John Zuspan, longtime railroader, longtime member of the NRC Board of Directors, and currently a consultant to the rail industry as President of Track Guy Consultants for his role in making these videos a tremendous success. John has been continually supported through the production of all 18 videos by the NRC Safety Committee, especially Stanley Beaver of Balfour Beatty Rail, and some of our member companies have even allowed filming to take place on their projects. A special thank you to Bob and Eric Hahn of Tracks Unlimited for allowing the filming this year, and thank you to everyone that has

supported this process, it is greatly appreciated. These two new videos will be available for distribution to our member companies at our conference in January.

On the legislative front, Congress has again punted on its job of funding a robust long-term surface transportation bill for highway and transit investments, and instead has resorted to accounting gimmicks to temporarily fund an inadequately sized bill through only May of 2015. The NRC will join other groups in continuing to push Congress to do the right thing, increase the size of this program, and come up with a sustainable source of funds to pay for a long-term bill.

Regarding the details of such a bill, the NRC supports eligibility for passenger and freight rail investments from highway accounts to the extent that those accounts are funded by non-gas tax sources, new dedicated funding for intercity passenger rail, new dedicated funding for a TIGER-like multimodal grant program focused on freight, provisions to expedite project delivery and make sure rail projects have the same streamlining provisions as highway and transit projects, expanding the Section 130 grade crossing program, and providing funding to support the implementation of Positive Train Control.

The FY2015 transportation appropriations bill must still be dealt with. A version of the bill has passed the House, and a separate version has passed the relevant Senate Committee and is awaiting action in the Senate. We support the higher funding levels provided by the Senate for crucial rail infrastructure programs including Amtrak capital and operating support accounts, TIGER grants, Federal Transit Administration formula funds, and FTA New Starts/Small Starts Capital Investment Grants.

Finally, two upcoming events for your calendar:

- The AREMA conference, Sunday September 28 through Wednesday October 1 at the Hilton Chicago.
- The NRC 2015 Conference and NRC/REMSA Exhibition, Wednesday January 7 through Saturday January 10, at the Westin Diplomat in Hollywood, FL. Registration is open – book now!

For additional information regarding all upcoming NRC events, please visit www.nrcma.org.

Have a safe day.

by Bill Dorris,
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