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ASLRRA Honors 295 Railroads for Safety Performance
Jake Award Recognizes Above Industry-Average Safety Performance for 2019

WASHINGTON – April 29, 2020 – The American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRA) has selected its annual Jake Award recipients, recognizing 295 member railroads for their above-industry average safety performance during 2019. To be honored with a Jake Award, an ASLRRA member railroad must perform better than the Class II and III industry average reportable injury frequency rate (number of incidents per 200,000 employee on-duty hours) as reported by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) during the calendar year, and must have completed all FRA-required Employee-On-Duty reporting for 2019.

Of the 295 Jake Award recipients, 278 member railroads will be honored ‘with Distinction’, recognizing their FRA reportable injury-free performance in 2019. This year’s results have shown significant improvement in the performance of ASLRRA members, and the short line industry. Of note:

- For ASLRRA short line members, the incident rate decreased year-over-year by 12%, while the overall Class II and III industry rate fell by 8%. 
Short line industry incident frequency rates have declined during a time when the overall freight industry has experienced a flattening, with rates very slightly up (1.83 to 1.87) in 2019.

The gap between incident reporting rate of ASLRRRA members and the overall FRA reporting rate is narrowing rapidly. In 2018, the gap was .6, and in 2019, the gap was .27, an improvement of 55%.

“Safety is at the forefront of our members’ operations, even more so during these turbulent times caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The short line industry is continuing to make significant strides towards zero injuries, with ASLRRRA members rapidly closing the gap as measured against the entire railroad community,” said Chuck Baker, President of ASLRRRA. “Our member railroads hold themselves accountable, focused not only on compliance, but on a strong safety culture. The declining injury rate in our industry is due in part to this constant focus, to continued strong investment into our infrastructure supported by the Short Line 45G Tax Credit, which enables our railroads to invest more of their revenue into newer, safer, upgraded infrastructure, to the Short Line Safety Institute, which has provided significant leadership in the area of safety culture to short line railroads.”

The short line industry’s continued investment in rail infrastructure has contributed to the 35% reduction in derailments and the 47% in track-caused accidents per million rail miles, and the 48% reduction of employee injuries per 200,000 man-hours since 2000.¹

The Jake Awards are named for Lowell S. “Jake” Jacobson, the President and General Manager of the Copper Basin Railway. After achieving a perfect safety record for the CBRY in 1993, Jake realized that there was no award that recognized smaller railroads’ safety records. In 1999, the ASLRRRA Safety Committee adopted the Jake Awards, and since then, has continued Mr. Jacobson’s legacy of rewarding and drawing attention to the high safety standards of the small railroad industry.
Since its inception in 1995, the Jake Award program has distributed more than 5,900 Jake and Jake with Distinction Awards to America’s small railroad community.

ASLRRRA would like to recognize the following members for their generous sponsorship support of the Jake Awards: Titanium Sponsors Genesee & Wyoming Railroad Services, Inc., and Iron Sponsors Aspen Insurance Company and Iowa Interstate Railroad, Ltd.

1 Railroad Safety Statistics as of June 2019, Federal Railroad Administration.

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.