ASLRRA Offers Disaster Response Resources to Members

In the wake of extreme weather events that have disrupted freight rail operations, ASLRRA has developed and provided resources on its website to help members develop emergency response plans in preparation for severe weather, natural disasters or other events that could cause damage to the rail network and disrupt normal business operations.

A variety of templates and checklists are available for download, including emergency docket filing instructions and a waiver template. Disaster plan materials include those for hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes and other weather events, emergency response plan guidance and an internal crisis management plan. Also online are materials for an incident involving hazardous materials. The site will continue to be updated and improved.

“Extreme weather events such as hurricanes, tornadoes, blizzards, intense heat waves, record cold snaps, floods, fires, and all variety of natural disasters can cause widespread damage to the national rail network, disrupting normal business operations for customers that depend on freight rail service. The potential human, community and economic impact of such events underscores the critical need for short line railroads to have a well thought-out emergency plan in place that can be activated at a moment’s notice,” said Chuck Baker, President, ASLRRA.

“Short lines need to be thinking through disaster preparation, response, mitigation and resiliency on the calm days so that they’re ready to respond in a crisis. As we looked to help our members in this effort, we put out the call for resources and our staff and supplier members answered that call, providing resources that can be adapted to fit a railroad operation’s unique needs in advance of an emergency occurrence.”

ASLRRA’s On-Demand Resource Library also enables members and non-members with a subscription to access recorded webinars covering topics related to emergency situations. These include crisis communications and media training, hazardous materials incident reporting and emergency notifications section review.

Educational Opportunities at ASLRRA’s Southern Region Meeting Bring Online Resources to Life

ASLRRA’s final regional meeting, the Southern Region Meeting held Nov. 11-13 in Charlotte, N.C., offers in many ways an extension of the numerous educational resources found on ASLRRA’s website.

One focus for this year’s meeting is disaster preparedness, which aligns with the Association’s new cache of resources related to that topic now offered to members online. In addition to a general session focused on disaster preparedness and response, meeting attendees can choose breakout sessions on related topics such as crisis communications and all hazards planning.

Other educational sessions include talks on cyber security, marijuana and CBD drug testing issues.
In addition to various educational opportunities, ASLRRA’s regional meeting will feature valuable networking opportunities and fun social events. Join us for the Southern Region Golf Tournament on Wednesday, Nov. 13. Follow the link for more information or to register.

PHMSA Defines Ethanol as it Relates to Tank Car Phase-Out Schedule

The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) has issued a response to an inquiry from the Association of American Railroads (AAR) regarding the definition of ethanol as it pertains to the phase-out schedule for DOT-111 specification tank cars.

According to the response, ethanol, as referenced in the phase-out schedule, is ethanol “described under an appropriate proper shipping name,” including “UN 1170, Ethanol or Ethanol solutions;” “NA 1987, Denatured alcohol;” “UN 1987, Alcohols” or “UN 3475, Ethanol and gasoline mixture or Ethanol and motor spirit mixture or Ethanol and petrol mixture, with more than 10% ethanol.” PHMSA’s definition of ethanol aligns with the definition in Canada.

The revised phase-out schedule was part of a final rule issued on Aug. 15, 2016 codifying certain Fixing America’s Transportation (FAST) Act mandates. The schedule affects all DOT-111 specification tank cars used to transport Class 3 flammable liquids, like ethanol.

AAR Releases Updated Version of Damage Prevention Rule Book

The Association of American Railroads (AAR) has issued an updated version of its Damage Prevention and Freight Claim Rule Book. This new issue supersedes the previous 2016 version, with all changes effective Nov. 1.

The rule book outlines freight claim rules, arbitration and mediation, and explains how to settle a damage claim once damage has occurred.

Railroad Retirement Board Updates Online Services Site with myRRB

The Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) has launched myRRB, a new landing site for the RRB’s collection of online services meant to offer a more streamlined and secure user experience.

While the same functions that were available with Benefit Online Services, which preceded myRRB, can still be found, the most significant change is the RRB’s partnership with login.gov. Through login.gov,
users can access government services from different agencies using a single email address and password. Those using a pin password account can still sign in to myRRB using that method, but are encouraged to migrate to login.gov as the pin password will soon be phased out.

The RRB’s switch to login.gov reflects the agency’s current efforts to modernize its core functions to “improve mission performance, expand service capabilities, and strengthen cybersecurity.” Follow the link above for more information about myRRB and login.gov.

ASLRRRA SAFETY & TRAINING
Reasonable Suspicion Drug & Alcohol Signs and Symptoms Training Video
Visit www.aslrra.org/safety for more info

Support for Short Line Tax Credit Continues to Reach Historic Numbers

The House bill known as the Building Rail Access for Customers and the Economy (BRACE) Act, H.R.510, has reached a historic milestone, garnering 294 co-sponsors. The number, which does not include the original sponsor Representative Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.), represents over two-thirds of members of the House of Representatives.

The BRACE Act would make the short line infrastructure investment tax credit, also called the 45G tax credit or 45G, permanent. The 45G tax credit was first enacted in 2005 and has been extended six times since, but it expired on Dec. 31, 2017 and has yet to be renewed.

“We now call on Congressional leadership to make this a reality for the thousands of agricultural, energy, and manufacturing customers and communities served by the more than 600 short line railroads,” said ASLRRRA President Chuck Baker. “These small businesses provide safe, efficient, environmentally-friendly freight service connecting small town and rural America with the broader domestic and global economies. The time to act is now - a timely renewal of the credit this fall is crucial to continue the benefits of this infrastructure investment and avoid dire consequences for the short line railroad industry. We are depending on Congress to work together to find a bipartisan tax deal that can move through both the House and the Senate quickly.”

The companion Senate bill, S.203, has 62 Senate co-sponsors. Support for the bill in both the House and Senate is decidedly bipartisan, with co-sponsors in both parts of Congress split almost equally between Democrats and Republicans.

Other government reports, including that of a bipartisan task force commissioned by Senate Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), have identified the 45G tax credit as one of only a few temporary tax provisions thought to be worth making permanent.
ASLRRRA Announcements

Use GREX’s Tie Inspection Services to Evaluate the Condition of Every Tie Along Your Rail Line

Each week, ASLRRRA will highlight one of its carefully chosen Member Discount Program providers to help members learn more about the companies offering valuable services at discounted prices.

GREX’s Aurora Track Inspection Technology is now available to ASLRRRA members with preferred pricing. Features of Aurora Track Inspection Technology include state-of-the-art imaging technology. Aurora scans track to reveal the exact condition of every tie along the way; pinpoints potential problems and marks their exact location; helps railroads plan repairs in the most efficient way possible; provides a detailed report enabling railroads to streamline capital maintenance programs; and helps ensure railroads are in line with industry regulations with compliance reports.

Turn tie inspections into savings and safety with Aurora’s ability to provide four scale tie grading, GPS coordinates for all ties, tie grade summaries per mile, a 39' FRA tie condition report, joint bar location report and joint tie condition report.

Visit www.aslrra.org/discounts to learn how GREX’s Aurora Track Inspection Technology can make railroad operations safer and more efficient.

With Eco-Friendly Locomotives, Short Lines Help Change Public Perception of Freight Railroads

To further tell the short line story, ASLRRRA will profile some of its members who are noteworthy movers and shakers in the railroad industry. The savvy decision-making and ingenuity of railroads and suppliers make their business achievements worth sharing.

The grainy black and white movie images and history-textbook photographs of huge engines belching thick gray smoke as they pull boxcars through the American countryside might be what many envision when asked about freight trains. But this is the 21st century. Short line railroads are pushing boundaries when it comes to using eco-friendly technology to move goods, and one of the most noticeable changes is in the type of locomotive being put into service.

In a recent article by Railway Age, Jake Harrison, general manager of ASLRRRA member California Northern Railroad Company, cannot say enough about his company’s two new U.S. EPA Tier 4-
compliant low-emission locomotives. Tier 4 locomotives meet the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s most stringent emissions restrictions, and the type used by California Northern is expected to reduce fuel consumption by 25 percent and diesel emissions by 93 percent compared to the 1970s-era locomotives the company replaced.

Not only that, the new locomotives work well. Or, as Harrison says, “really, really well.” There is no struggling to move the 30 to 50 cars a crew hauls daily, and one locomotive can do the work of two.

California Northern’s new locomotives were made by ASLRRA supplier member Knoxville Locomotive Works (KLW), which has developed a full line of eco-friendly locomotives. ASLRRA member Stockton Terminal and Eastern Railroad unveiled its own KLW-built locomotive in April, estimating that their KLW SE10B T4L unit is over 90 percent cleaner than a standard locomotive and offers 40 to 50 percent savings in fuel.

In addition to KLW, other ASLRRA supplier member companies have turned their attention to creating Tier 4 locomotives. For instance, Cummins worked with R.J. Corman Railpower Locomotive to build a dependable freight locomotive. The two companies chose the Cummins QSK60 EPA Certified Tier 4 engine as the basis for their Road Number 2017, which can be used for the R.J. Corman Railroad fleet.

With most short lines operating significantly fewer track miles than Class I railroads, locomotives can be kept in service for much longer, and the cost of new models is often prohibitive. Yet, recognizing the importance of reducing harmful emissions and the financial benefits of fuel savings, small railroads have made the effort to finance the purchase of these Tier 4 locomotives, including seeking out various grants and funding opportunities. This way, short lines are re-shaping the image of freight railroading, one eco-friendly locomotive at a time.

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**ASLRRRA Out and About**

**Strang, Gelnar Attend SOFA Committee Meeting in D.C.**

ASLRRRA’s Senior Vice President of Safety and Regulatory Policy Jo Strang and Vice President of Safety and Compliance JR Gelnar represented the Association at the Switching and Operations Fatality Analysis (SOFA) committee meeting hosted by the Association of American Railroads.

The SOFA committee meeting, held Oct. 22-23 in Washington, D.C., focused on switching incidents and the possible addition of serious injuries to the committee’s future reviews.
ASLRA Webinars

**Private Grade-Crossing Safety** - Oct. 31, 2019

ASLRA's Vice President of Safety and Compliance JR Gelnar will teach participants about regulatory requirements regarding private crossings, as well as evaluating the overall safety of a private crossing and how to work with local officials and landowners in mitigating safety concerns.

**RRB General Eligibility and Employee Benefits** - Nov. 5, 2019

Jodi Huskey, a Railroad Retirement Board district manager, will present the first of three webinars discussing railroad retirement and disabilities benefits. This webinar discusses general eligibility requirements and employee benefits.

**Ops Testing with Employee Performance Tracking for Compliance** - Nov. 6, 2019

This webinar, presented by CloudMoyo's Senior Railroad Consultant and Program Manager Ashok Madhavan, will cover operations testing with performance tracking and employee accountability for safety compliance. Madhavan will explain how railroads can ensure effective ops testing to build employee accountability for safety compliance, and will share tips to build a robust program, track employee performance through accountability tools, and help labor relations to improve safety.

Click here for more ASLRA events.

**Industry Events**

Click here for a listing of industry events.

Views & News is published by American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association. Please contact Amy Krouse, editor, with questions or comments.