April 15, 2020

**With a Nation in Crisis, the Short Line Industry is Delivering**

Freight railroads are a critical part of America’s supply chain, and our employees are Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our front-line work is kept strong and healthy by the many workers making sure important goods arrive in the right place, at the right time. We are 600+ small business railroads, who provide the first and last mile, keeping goods and raw materials moving, from farm to factory, from factory to retail outlets, all across America. Highlights from across the nation of our members meeting customer and community needs are found here.

In the midst of the #COVID19 crisis, #shortlinesRfrontlines, so #thankarailroader!

**Webinars Offer Key Business Education to Members**

ASLRRA has offered remote training opportunities long before COVID-19 made them essential, and the Association is working harder than ever to offer railroad employees top-notch webinars for anytime education on industry-critical topics.

Get a debrief on CDC guidance and expectations of employers while COVID-19 restrictions are in place on Thursday, April 16. ASLRRA will host Dr. Timothy McCormick and Dr. Randy Soo Hoo of Transportation Occupational Medicine Consultants for a webinar titled “COVID-19: CDC Guidance and Strategies for Employers.” They will provide an overview of CDC guidelines and mitigation strategies and answer attendees’ questions during a question and answer segment.

Registered participants are asked to submit questions in advance to allow the speakers to provide the most accurate, comprehensive answers possible. Questions can be submitted here.

Other ASLRRA webinars help enhance different aspects of the rail workplace. Ensure employees are feeling supported on the job, particularly during this difficult time, with “Employer Training Resources:

**ASLRRA Contact List**

During this time of uncertainty many of our members have questions on a wide range of topics. While our staff is largely working from home, we are still eager to help find the answers you need. Below is a list of staff contacts and their specific areas of focus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Area</th>
<th>Contact</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safety, Access, FRA Issues</td>
<td>Jo Strang, <a href="mailto:jstrang@aslrra.org">jstrang@aslrra.org</a></td>
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<td>JR Gelnar, <a href="mailto:jrgelnar@aslrra.org">jrgelnar@aslrra.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>State-Level Issues</td>
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<td>Membership, Annual Meeting,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exhibition Hall</td>
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<td>Website, Webinar Registration, Email</td>
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<td>Media, Communications</td>
<td>Amy Krouse, <a href="mailto:akrouse@aslrra.org">akrouse@aslrra.org</a></td>
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Registered Apprenticeships” on April 22. SPRING President Michele Malski and FASTPORT Executive Director of Military Engagement and Apprenticeships Dave Harrison will explain the benefits of establishing a federally registered apprenticeship program and how to start one.

With limitations on crew availability brought on by COVID-19 constraints, make sure to maximize available people assets. On April 23, Shannon Bloxom and Ashok Madhavan, senior railroad consultants at CloudMoyo, will outline how an integrated, technology-driven approach to duty assignments, safety testing, and crew training can help railroads optimize crew operations and meet safety requirements in a simplified and efficient manner. During the webinar, “Service Excellence with Integrated Crew & Safety Management,” they will also discuss how railroads can leverage in-depth insights with latest analytics technologies to better optimize crew, meet FRA and regulatory requirements, and track operational metrics.

Follow the links for each webinar to learn more or register.

FRA Allows Locomotive Event Recorders for Engineer Recertification

On April 10 the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) granted a request from ASLRRA, the Association of American Railroads (AAR) and the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) for relief from regulations covered in 49 CFR 240.127, which requires an in-person assessment of locomotive engineer skill performance for engineer recertification.

In the initial request, the associations asked that railroads be allowed to use available electronic information sources, like locomotive event recorders, to remotely evaluate the performance of recertification candidates. Doing so would facilitate CDC-recommended social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic and help railroads avoid or cope with anticipated COVID-19-related staffing shortages.

The FRA will allow railroads to use event recorders to conduct skill performance examination of recertification candidates, subject to other conditions. For example, railroads must maintain an updated list of affected certified employees, and employee certification records must indicate that an individual’s skill performance evaluation was conducted under the waiver.

FRA Will Not Require Reporting of Certain COVID-19 Cases on Incident Report Forms

According to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), railroads are not required to report employees with a confirmed or unconfirmed but suspected case of COVID-19 on forms required by 49 CFR Part 225, the railroad accident/incident report forms.

The FRA’s statement was made in response to several inquiries from railroads regarding the matter. The enforcement discretion applies when “there is no reasonably available, objective evidence that the confirmed case resulted from a work-related exposure,” since easy community transmission of the disease makes it difficult to determine conclusively whether an employee contracted COVID-19 while on duty.

Railroads also do not have to report precautionary quarantining due to COVID-19 concerns.
U.S. Customs Issues Guidance for FEMA Rule Prohibiting PPE Exports

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) issued updated guidance regarding the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) temporary final rule regarding the prohibition of exports of certain personal protective equipment (PPE).

FEMA’s temporary rule, which was published April 10 in the Federal Register, identifies five types of PPE covered by the rule, and says no shipments of such materials can leave the U.S. without approval from FEMA.

The CBP further explains that the prohibition is focused on commercial quantities of PPE, which is currently defined as shipments valued over $2,500 and containing more than 10,000 units of the five types of affected commodities. The guidance also explains how ports should handle such shipments.

ASLRRA On-Demand Webinars Focus on COVID-19 Relief Laws

The government relief laws meant to help buoy the U.S. economy during the COVID-19 crisis can easily overwhelm those trying to understand how to take advantage of tax credits and other benefits.

To help its members, ASLRRA conducted three webinars explaining the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) and Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, especially as they pertain to small railroads and industry suppliers.

In “CV2: Reviewing the Families First Coronavirus Response Act,” financial experts from Bowers & Company CPAs reviewed what the bill covers and its tax impacts on short line railroads. In “CV3: Reviewing the CARES Stimulus Package,” a team from Chambers, Conlon & Hartwell provided an overview of the law’s provisions that matter most to short line railroads. And in “CV2: A Railroad Employer’s Guide to the FFCRA Legislation” labor and employment counsel at Fletcher & Sippel focused on paid leave and unemployment benefits for employees and families.

All three webinars can be found in ASLRRA’s On-Demand Webinar library, which members can access for free. Non-members can purchase a subscription to the webinar library.
ASLRRRA Announcements

Progressive Railroading Article Looks at Precision Scheduled Railroading and its Effect on Short Lines

In a recent article, Progressive Railroading explores the impact of precision scheduled railroading (PSR) on short line and regional railroad operations, explaining how the new Class I operating strategy is having a mixed effect on its smaller partners.

ASLRRRA President Chuck Baker, as well as several representatives from ASLRRRA-member short lines, communicated with Progressive Railroading via email about PSR, which is an emphasis on more streamlined operations and aggressive pursuit of efficiency and cost cutting.

As Baker succinctly put it, when it comes to PSR and short lines, “There are pluses, minuses and unknowns.”

A push for efficiency has led to some boost for short lines, with more frequent service and an opportunity to pick up business Class Is have cut. For some railroads, like those run by ASLRRRA member Watco Companies, LLC, PSR led to an increase in operations through more frequent daily service, while fellow member Maryland and Delaware Railroad has upped revenue by taking on in-transit storage customers dropped by Class Is.

One downfall of PSR is a general effort to cut costs, resulting in the loss of employees in sales, customer service and marketing departments at Class Is who had formed strong relationships with clients and short lines. Class Is also want to shed less profitable business and both actions, some short line leaders argue, are counterproductive and lead to “confusion in the marketplace.”

“I think it’s easy to cut, but it’s really hard to grow,” says Joe Parsons, president and CEO of ASLRRRA member Iowa Interstate Railroad. “And that’s the challenge the railroad industry has going forward: How do we continue to grow and how do we continue to be a vital part of the nation’s transportation network.”

Though differing ideas as to the definition of PSR and its implementation among Class Is has made adjusting to rolling changes more difficult for some small railroads, the tendency of short lines to be nimbler and more adaptable will help them in the long run.

“We’re optimistic that we’ll see less of the negatives over time,” said Baker. “If we have a better network and service to sell, that gives us lots of positives for the long haul.”

Short Line Safety Institute Offering Leadership Development Training

The Short Line Safety Institute (SLSI) has scheduled two Leadership Development Training courses in June and July for railroad managers.

The June 9-11 course will take place in Westfield, Mass., while the July 21-23 course will be held in Jeffersonville, Ind. The July course was originally slated for May, but rescheduled due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The focus of the Leadership Development Training program, which was launched last summer, is to develop communication, mentoring and coaching skills in railroad management. It is designed for both new and experienced railroad managers and delivers content through activities like roleplay, self-assessment and group discussion.

The Leadership Development Program is available free of charge to any short line railroad, and can be made available to an individual railroad, or a broader group. For more information or to register for the June or July events, follow the links above. To schedule a class for your group or company, contact Sam Cotton, SLSI’s director of safety culture programs.
Member Survey Participation is Key to Delivering Support for Members

As our industry adapts its response to the COVID-19 outbreak, ASLRA is surveying its railroad members for detailed information regarding impacts to their operations and resources to enable the Association to better work with federal agencies like the Federal Railroad Administration, Surface Transportation Board and Railroad Retirement Board, and Congressional leadership.

Our main survey on COVID-19 is e-mailed to railroads with updated questions on a weekly basis. For any questions regarding our survey efforts, please reach out to Fred Oelsner at foelsner@aslrra.org.

In addition to soliciting responses to surveys, ASLRA would like to hear stories detailing how short line railroads are keeping business and the American economy going through the COVID-19 outbreak.

These stories help ASLRA paint a clearer picture of the crucial role short lines play in helping the nation cope with extreme emergencies, which allows the Association to work more effectively with policy makers and regulators, and Congress on behalf of its members.

Please contact Amy Krouse at akrouse@aslrra.org to tell her how your railroad or company is working hard in the midst of this national crisis.

ASLRA Out and About

Chuck Baker Talks COVID-19 and Its Effects on Rail During NEARS Podcast

ASLRA President Chuck Baker joined other speakers for a North East Association of Rail Shippers (NEARS) podcast focused on discussing the impact of COVID-19 on the railroad industry, taking into consideration political, economic, operational and social angles.

Participants also discussed what the railroad industry might look like once the nation’s economy is reopened and various restrictions are lifted. The podcast was moderated by Jason Seidl, a managing director at investment company Cowen and past president of the NEARS board of directors.

ASLRA’s VP of Communications Named to TRB Committee Leadership

Amy Krouse, vice president of communications at ASLRA, has been appointed as secretary of the Transportation Research Board’s standing committee on freight rail transportation (AR040).

The committee is concerned with the spectrum of strategic, technical and planning issues related to freight rail transportation. The Committee's areas of emphasis include relationships between railroads, including the roles of railroads in the freight marketplace; demand for freight services, including intermodal traffic; the economics of freight railroads and related topics; integrating rail transport into federal, state and local transportation planning processes; public and private investment strategies including public/private partnerships; assessing regulatory issues and impacts; identifying areas of needed technical research; and promoting implementation of new rail technology.
ASLRRA’s Member Discount Program Includes Grant Writing Services!
Visit aslrra.org to learn more.

ASLRRA Webinars
Access Webinars On-Demand to Learn About COVID-19 Legislation


These webinars help members understand how the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) and Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) legislation impact small railroads and industry suppliers.

The On-Demand Webinars library on the ASLRRA website features these and dozens of other relevant and timely webinar recordings. On-Demand Webinars are available FREE to ASLRRA members and by subscription to non-members.

In addition to on-demand webinars, ASLRRA is always working to provide its members with top-notch education, bringing industry and subject-matter experts right to your desk. Find out about our upcoming live webinars below - use the links to learn more or register.

Upcoming Webinars
For information about webinars focused on COVID-19-related issues, please see the article at the top of this week’s newsletter.

COVID-19: CDC Guidance and Strategies for Employers - April 16, 2020

Employer Training Resources: Registered Apprenticeships - April 22, 2020

Service Excellence with Integrated Crew & Safety Management - April 23, 2020 (Note New Date)

Click here for more ASLRRA events.
Industry Events

Click here for a listing of industry events. Cancellations due to COVID-19 restrictions will be noted as information becomes available.

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