ASLRA Announces 2020 Safety Person and Safety Professional of the Year Award Winners

ASLRRA has chosen the recipients of this year’s individual safety awards, naming Jose Jimenez Safety Person of the Year and Travis Herod Safety Professional of the Year.

The Safety Person of the Year award recognizes a non-management employee of an ASLRRA member railroad who exhibits knowledge and practice of safety procedures within his or her company, with no reported self-injuries, and contributes off-duty time to safety procedures and awareness in their communities.

Jimenez, a machinist at The Belt Railway Company of Chicago (BRC), who in 2019 took the lead in identifying the causes of recent injuries and taking steps to modify processes to reduce risk. He has produced new and improved safety procedures in his workplace, resulting in improved production and increased team morale and motivation. Not only that, there have been no additional injuries since Jimenez’s approach was applied.

The Safety Professional of the Year Award honors an ASLRRA railroad member employee who demonstrates excellence via his or her communication and leadership skills in the interest of safety, is selfless in his or her actions, and consistently documents safety achievements as a team leader.

Herod, senior vice president of environmental, health and safety at Watco Companies (Watco), has been a driving force behind Watco’s safety programs and training courses, including leading the company’s new shift in safety philosophy, Watco’s Safety Management System. The program takes a more proactive approach to preventing incidents and accidents, leading to record-low safety metrics in 2019 and putting the company on track for another record-breaking year in 2020.

“Our short line members value safety above all else, staying focused on keeping everybody on and around the railroad safe, despite multiple competing priorities.” said ASLRRA President Chuck Baker in a press release. “The 2020 award winners have prioritized safety day in and day out throughout their careers, on their own railroads, and in their communities. We are honored to recognize their dedication to bringing each employee home safely every night, and grateful for their contributions to the freight rail industry.”

Short Line Safety Institute Welcomes Julia Leone
The Short Line Safety Institute (SLSI) has hired Julia Leone as its new manager of research and organizational development.

In her role, Leone will help establish and manage priorities and goals for process improvements; build systems to monitor, evaluate and report on progress; and direct efforts to ensure quality and consistency through the application of systematic approaches in its program design and execution. In addition, Julia will lead the organization’s research efforts.

“Our program expansion has come as a direct result of systemic analysis of Safety Culture Assessments performed over five years on short line railroads. Insightful analysis of the data has identified opportunity areas to increase safety culture on small railroads, and has led to new training programs such as the HazMat Training and Leadership Development Training to close those gaps at no cost to railroads,” said Short Line Safety Institute Executive Director Tom Murta in a press release. “Julia will be critical in assisting us in identifying and developing the next generation of programs, while ensuring that our current programs deliver on their objectives and support our mission to continuously increase Safety Culture on short line railroads across the U.S.”

**Deadline Extended to August 15 for RRIF Express Loan Program**

Small railroads interested in pursuing financing for infrastructure modernization projects now have an extra two months to apply for Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing Express Program (RRIF Express) loans.

Stakeholder feedback and complications due to the COVID-19 pandemic have led the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to provide a 60-day deadline extension for RRIF Express letters of interest from prospective borrowers. The new due date is Aug. 15.

RRIF Express is a pilot program meant to increase access to RRIF loans for short line and regional railroads looking to fund infrastructure projects. The application process is less time consuming and cost prohibitive for small railroads.

Those needing help with applying for an RRIF Express loan can access an ASLRRA webinar recording titled “Insights into the RRIF Express Loan Application Process” found in the Association’s On-Demand Webinar library. Members have free access to this webinar, which explains what is needed and what to expect when applying. Non-members can access ASLRRA’s recorded webinars by purchasing a subscription.
PHMSA Final Rule Allows Transportation of LNG by Rail

The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) issued a final rule authorizing the bulk transport of liquefied natural gas (LNG) in rail tank cars on June 19, 2020.

The following are the key differences between the NPRM and Final Rule:

- Maximum permitted filling density increased from 32.5% to 37.3%
- Requirement for 2-way EOT or Distributed Power: Not in NPRM but required in Final Rule for a block of 20 consecutive cars or 35 cars or more distributed through train.
- Shell 7/16" and head shield ½" in NPRM, 9/16" for both in Final Rule
- Outer tank steel from AAR tank car spec Appendix M to AAR TC 128, Grade B normalized steel plate
- Requirement for remote monitoring for pressure and location.
- Shipper must notify carrier if rise in pressure exceeds 3 psig in 24-hour period
- Indicates the likelihood of LNG Unit trains will initially be low
- PHMSA and FRA expect the industry to develop best practices and implement the technologies needed to monitor
- The estimated cost of monitoring technology is $2.4 - $4K plus software.

The DOT agencies stated that they thought the growth in LNG would be slow to start as there are not that many compliant cars available. This final rule is needed to move LNG safely. Please contact Jo Strang (Jstrang@aslrra.org) or JR Gelnar (jrgelnar@aslrra.org) with questions.

PHMSA Extends Non-Enforcement Action for Recurring Training, and Transportation of Sanitizing and Disinfecting Materials Through October 31, 2020

The U.S. Department of Transportation’s Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) understands that many offerors and carriers of hazardous materials continue to experience difficulty in either obtaining or providing recurrent training as required by the Hazardous Materials Regulations (HMR, 49 CFR Parts 171-180).

Therefore, PHMSA gave notice that it will continue to not take enforcement action against any offeror or carrier who is unable to provide recurrent training consistent with HMR training requirements until October 31, 2020.

Similarly, PHMSA also gave notice that it will continue to not take enforcement action against any offeror or carrier offering or transporting sanitizing and disinfecting materials in accordance with the April 10, 2020 Notice of Enforcement Discretion through October 31, 2020.

U.S. DOT Announces INFRA Grant Awards

Twenty projects in 20 states will receive $906 million in grants through the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant program, according to a recent announcement by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).

Of the 20 winning projects, two are rail specific and two are for port facilities with rail connections. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation and the City of Tulsa-Rogers County Port Authority will receive roughly $6 million each for rail projects, while Port Tampa Bay in Florida will receive $19.8 million and the Port of Houston Authority in Texas will receive $79.4 million. The remaining 16 projects are highway related.
Overall, 53 percent of this year’s INFRA grant awards will go to rural projects, with several projects partially located in Opportunity Zones, and a few others located near Opportunity Zones.

Surface Transportation Board Withdraws Proposed Rule to Change Cost of Capital Calculation Method

The Surface Transportation Board (STB) has withdrawn a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) that would have changed its existing method for calculating the railroad industry’s cost of capital. The Board will also discontinue the proceeding.

The proposed revisions would have incorporated an additional model, called the “Step Multi-Stage Discounted Cash Flow Model,” to the two existing models used to determine the cost-of-equity component of the cost of capital. The STB withdrew the NPRM after comments and replies received in response to the notice.

ASLRRA Comments on INVEST in America Act, Now Part of Larger Moving Forward Act

In response to the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee’s approval on June 18 of the Investing in a New Vision for the Environment and Surface Transportation (INVEST) in America Act, ASLRRA offered its thoughts on the bill’s strengths and weaknesses as it relates to the short line railroad industry.

ASLRRA’s press release highlights some of the positive aspects of the INVEST in America Act, including a significant increase in funding for the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure Safety Improvements (CRISI) grant program, support of state freight investments through the National Highway Freight Program, and authorization of funding for the Short Line Safety Institute.

Some of the bill’s problematic provisions include requiring two-person crews on certain railroads and certain trips, implementing a mandate regarding blocked crossings that would reduce rail network efficiency and banning the transportation of liquefied natural gas (LNG) by rail.

ASLRRA President Chuck Baker applauded the House committee for bringing the bill forward, noting that the Association is “committed to engaging with Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle, on both sides of the dome, and on Zoom screens everywhere, to improve this bill as it moves forward.”

“Short lines are committed to being good partners to the thousands of agricultural, energy, and manufacturing shippers we serve in thousands of small towns and communities across the country, and we will work with Congress to make sure that this legislation allows us keep that commitment,” said Baker.
On June 22, House Democrats released text of H.R. 2, the Moving Forward Act. The bill proposes $1.2 trillion in infrastructure investment and includes the Investing in a New Vision for the Environment and Surface Transportation (INVEST) in America Act as one of its provisions.

In addition to the INVEST in America Act, which would provide $494 billion over five years for surface and rail transportation infrastructure, the Moving Forward Act includes infrastructure funding for school and child care facilities, affordable housing, the U.S. Postal Service, and renewable energy.

ASLRA Announcements

Training Videos Help ASLRA Members Maintain Safe Operations and Regulatory Compliance

ASLRA is dedicated to railroad safety and compliance and strives to assist members with industry best practices and compliance throughout their operations by offering a wealth of safety and compliance resources.

Training videos are a popular and important safety resource available as a direct download from the association website. The Post-Accident Toxicological Testing (PATT) Video is an interactive training video produced by the industry, with input from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), that provides instruction on when and how to administer post-accident drug and alcohol tests.

Federal Regulation Part 219.11(g) requires Post-Accident Toxicological Testing (PATT) training for supervisors of regulated employees. This PATT eLearning course has been reviewed by the FRA and will ensure compliance with the PATT training requirements.

ASLRA also offers a Reasonable Suspicion Drug & Alcohol Signs and Symptoms video that provides detailed direction on drug and alcohol testing guidelines. This video teaches railroad workers how to recognize possible impairment, what substances to test for, how to conduct a proper test, and steps to take in case of a positive test, among many other components. Part 219.11(g) requires signs and symptoms training for supervisors of regulated employees. Utilization of this video will ensure compliance.

While most downloadable materials are available at no cost to ASLRA members many are available to non-members for a fee, including training videos and most - but not all - compliance program templates.
Visit the Safety & Compliance page on our website to view a complete list of available safety and compliance tools and resources.

Register Today for ASLRRA’s Upcoming Training Seminars

ASLRRA and its partners are offering several different training seminars in August, September and October discussing topics related to regulations and compliance. All seminars will take place at ASLRRA member Iowa Northern Railway’s training center in Waterloo, Iowa. Follow each of the links below to register today.

The Advanced Designated Supervisor of Locomotive Engineer (DSLE) and Labor Relations Training Seminar will be held Aug. 11-13. Although registration is full, those interested in attending can register to be added to a wait list.

The Association’s regulatory module of the Leadership Development Training program, developed in collaboration with the Short Line Safety Institute, will be presented Sept. 23-24. This module covers critical regulatory information for short line and regional railroad managers to strengthen the understanding and application of certain regulations to enhance railroads’ overall safety practices and culture.

A third event, the Comprehensive General Code of Operating Rules (GCOR) Training Seminar, will take place Oct. 27-29. The seminar is intended for railroads that have adopted the GCOR as their operating rules, and training will emphasize the revised rules and transition guide. This seminar may be used to meet operating rules training as required by 49 CFR Part 240, 242 and 214 Subpart C.

ASLRRA New Members

ASLRRA Welcomes New Associate Business Member

ASLRRA is pleased to welcome Railroad OP Services LLC, based in Bridgeville, Del., as a new associate business member. The firm provides railroads with solutions and services to improve safety culture, compliance with rules and other governance, reduce regulatory exposure risk and build brand. Consultant placement services pair railroads with industrial experts to assure management and supervisors have the requisite intelligence, skills and tools to effectively perform oversight duties and manage people. Our primary contact is Principal Joseph D. Riley, a retired safety specialist with the Federal Railroad Administration, who can be reached at jdriley@railroadopservices.com or (845) 489-4468. Many thanks to our own JR Gelnar for the assist with this new membership.
ASLRRA Webinars

Access On-Demand Webinars to View Popular RRB Recordings

Last year, ASLRRA partnered with the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) to produce a series of three webinars explaining eligibility requirements and benefits to railroad employees. More recently, ASLRRA and the RRB presented a webinar explaining employee benefits under the COVID-19 pandemic. Recordings of all four webinars are available on-demand through ASLRRA’s On-Demand Webinar library.

On-demand webinars are free to ASLRRA members and available by paid subscription to non-members. In addition to these RRB webinars, users can access over 100 other recordings covering a wide variety of topics, from human resources and communications to legal issues and COVID-19-related topics. Follow the link above to browse ASLRRA’s offerings today.

Upcoming Webinars

Best Practices for Qualification Tracking and Assessments - July 16, 2020

Ashok Madhavan, senior railroad consultant at CloudMoyo, will talk about how to help ensure safe and compliant railroad operations through a comprehensive, digital qualification tracking system. This webinar will also feature a question and answer segment with Jeff Black and Mike Prince of the Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis (TRRA), who will talk about how they use a qualification tracking system at TRRA. This webinar is free for ASLRRA members.

Click here for more ASLRRA events.

Industry Events

Association of American Railroads Committees to Offer Free Webinars
The Association of American Railroads (AAR) is offering a free webinar on June 25 hosted by members of its Asset Health Strategy Committee. Then, on July 16, the AAR’s Damage Prevention and Freight Claim Committee will hold their open summer committee meeting in an online webinar format.

The asset health strategy webinar will discuss topics such as regulatory modernization efforts, technology-driven train inspection, and equipment health monitoring. The issues covered during the webinar relate to the Asset Health Strategy Committee’s efforts to support and improve railcar health in North America.

The summer committee meeting will discuss new publications, testing updates and other topics of interest to the damage prevention industry. Meeting registration prior to the event is requested.

Follow the first link to go directly to the asset health webinar, which will be held from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. EDT. Follow the second link to register for the summer committee meeting.

[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.