



Rail HazMat Newsletter

January

NATIONAL LABOR COLLEGE / RAIL WORKER HAZARDOUS MATERIALS TRAINING PROGRAM

2011

PEER TRAINERS DEDICATED TO PROVIDING QUALITY EDUCATION AND AWARENESS OF HAZARDOUS MATERIALS, EMPOWERING RAIL WORKERS AND COMMUNITIES

Tight Budget Underscores Need for Regional Peer Trainers

Funding for our 2010-2011 fiscal year has been reduced from the 2009-2010 levels. A reflection of the still sluggish economy and high demand on grant providers, the Rail Hazmat Program has been forced to limit the number of classes and cancel plans for a DOT Trainers' Exchange this summer.

The reduction in class offerings underscores the importance of what the regional peer trainers do in the field. More and more, we rely on the one-on-one or small group training that these brothers & sisters provide to make sure

that railroaders are getting the information they need to move hazardous materials safely.

We depend on regional trainers to organize one-day DOT awareness classes, for which we can then provide materials and – in some cases – a staff trainer to support their efforts.

In early December, for example, regional peer trainers Joe “Scott” Chelette, Renwick Dumas, and Will Richardson from New Orleans organized an 8-hour DOT awareness class. Staff trainer Carl Fields was on hand to assist.

Minnesota Railroaders Learn Chemical/Emergency Response

ST. PAUL – “Workers fully clad in hazmat suits descended on the St. Paul Labor Centre parking lot Sept. 29, unfurling yellow caution tape and scurrying toward pipes and barrels leaking indeterminate liquids. Fortunately, it was only a drill.”

This was the opening line of an article posted by *Workday Minnesota* on its website, describing a four-day class organized by the Minnesota Railroad Intercrew Association and the Rail HazMat training program. The Minnesota Railroad Intercrew Association, formed in 1982, is comprised of the United Transportation Union, the Teamsters, and the Transportation Communication Workers, an affiliate of the Machinists union.

Four staff trainers and a truckload of gear – boots, barrels, & decon shower – took our chemical/emergency response training to 18 rail workers half-way across the country. In the photo at left, Freddie Thomas films a team trying to plug a leak of “sulfuric acid”.



Photo by Michael Moore, Workday Minnesota

Rail Hazmat Trainer Appointed Coordinator BLET Safety Task Force

Staff Trainer Carl Fields has been appointed to serve his union, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen, as coordinator of its Safety Task Force (STF). Since 1989, the STF has participated in accident investigations conducted by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), contributing both to the cause-finding and safety recommendation phases from the perspective of the operating crew.

Carl is legislative representative for BLET Division 682 (Hammond, Ind.) and secretary-treasurer of the BLET Indiana State Legislative Board. He has been a valued member of the Rail Hazmat Training Program since 2006.

Known for his often self-deprecating humor, Brother Carl began his railroad career in 1978 on April Fool's Day! First a trainman for the Norfolk & Western Railroad (Nickel Plate Road) at Calumet yard in Chicago, Carl has also been a yardmaster, car retarder operator, and – for the last 20 years – a locomotive engineer. He now works for the Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad.

Carl brings to his new position a wealth of knowledge and expertise accumulated during those decades of experience. As noted by



BLET National Secretary-Treasurer & Vice President Bill Walpert congratulates Carl on his appointment.

BLET National President Dennis Pierce, he “has admirably represented the BLET in numerous accident investigations over the past several years, most notably the tragic Norfolk Southern crash in Graniteville, S.C.”

His dedication to the safety of his brother and sister railroaders is not news to those of us who have worked with and learned from Carl. We are proud that his commitment is recognized through this appointment.

CONGRATULATIONS CARL!

Upcoming Class Dates

Chemical/Emergency Response

March 20-25, 2011
May 1-6, 2011
May 8-13, 2011

DOE Radiological Transportation

(No stipend available)

April 9-10, 2011
June 4-5, 2011

July 16-17, 2011

DOT Train-the-Trainer
(Must have taken C/ER class.)

April 10-15, 2011
June 5-10, 2011
July 17-22, 2011

Anyone interested in attending a program should register online at www.hazmatgmc.org or contact our office.

Persistence Pays Off!!!

By Staff Trainer Dickie Westbrook

I attended my first NLC Rail Hazmat Program class in September 2006 and the Train-the-Trainer that October. Like most students, I left ready to train the world. How could Norfolk Southern not take advantage of my new-found knowledge?

Even with the offer of my services at no cost, the railroad did not want any part of it. I wrote letters to each of three different Division Managers. Most congratulated me on getting this training, but said their training program already went far beyond what was required by law. Our latest division manager chose to ignore my last letter all together.

I had numerous sit down meetings with my general manager and trainmasters. With my GM, it was on again off again. Every time I made a little progress, something happened on the railroad like someone getting hurt or a rule-violation derailment, and it was off again.

Meanwhile, there were opportunities to put the knowledge I'd gained to work. A chemical plant fire in Apex, NC, sent fumes into our yard, sickening a train crew. I knew who to call and how to do the research to find the probable cause of the employees' symptoms.

I worked to get my coworkers to sign up for the Rail Hazmat program. One engineer, just after attending the awareness course at NLC, found himself on a train with a leaking car of ammonia. The dispatcher wanted to send his conductor back to check the leak, but this engineer wouldn't let him go – they already knew what the chemical was – and refused to stop his train in the middle of a town, moving it down the road to a less-populated area.

Following a recent derailment in Raleigh yard, the crane people needed to off load an ethanol car before lifting it back on the rail. Our supervisors wanted to fill an empty tank car in



Dickie Westbrook is a conductor for Norfolk Southern in North Carolina and state legislative director of the UTU. But mountain biking is his passion!

the yard with the ethanol, without knowing what the last product in the tank car was. The yardmaster, who has taken the CER class, advised them this was not a good move, so they used tank trucks instead.

One-on-one training is an ongoing thing. During some downtime the other day, I pulled out my laptop and showed a couple of PowerPoints to my engineer and our new trainmaster trainee. I just keep pushing here and there, waiting for that big break!

After 4 years, I am finally making some progress. I gave two classes for new-hires; my General Manager sat in on one and was impressed, so I will be doing more. I've been talking to our maintenance-of-way department and they are interested in a class. They get even less hazmat training than we do. And, with Henry's help, I have written our Division Manager again offering hazmat training.

I guess the best advice I can give a new trainer is: Don't give up and be flexible. If they give you 10 minutes at a rules class, take it. Our message is strong and will leak through even the thickest walls.

Reaching Out at Union Conferences Staff & Regional Trainers Raise Awareness

Staff and regional peer trainers have been busy this year, setting up displays, leading workshops, and talking up the Rail Hazmat Program. Some of our most successful efforts have been at various union conferences and conventions across the country.

Former program director Brenda Cantrell staffed a booth at the national convention of the BMWED in Las Vegas this summer. "There was a great deal of interest and lots of former 'students' came by Everyone remembers their experience in hazmat class. We got quite a few 'recruits' who signed up and actually came to class after June 2010.... All in all it's worthwhile to do this kind of thing at conventions."

In July and August, 8-hour DOT awareness classes in Phoenix and Asheville, NC, were held the day before the annual UTU regional meetings. Staff trainer Charlie Jones organized a group of regional trainers to do most of the presentations. Workshops focusing on hazmat incident first response and radiological transportation were also held during the formal conference sessions.



Regional peer trainers Ralph Alter (BLET) and Angela Alter (UTU) led the module at the Phoenix awareness class on the actions of a first responder.

Staff trainer Carl Fields attended the national convention of the BLET in Reno, NV, during early October and was able to reach hundreds

of his fellow members at a table, using the Toolbox and DOT awareness manual. Carl has also done presentations before the BLET Illinois state legislative board.

If you know of a union event that is planned, please let the office staff know. Materials are available for display tables and staff trainers may be able to assist with presentations.

New Materials Available

Two new items have now been produced to add to the regional peer trainers' arsenal of training materials.

The first is a pocket pamphlet addressing the hazards of transporting radiological materials and the actions of a first responder to a radiological incident. The pamphlet is in the same format as the HazMat Pocket Pamphlet (HMPP) and is designed for one-on-one training contacts and as an introduction to the topic and our program.

The second item is a kit of display materials that can be used on union bulletin boards, at meetings or conferences, or in classroom training sessions. Each regional peer trainer will be receiving a kit of laminated display items plus a small handbook, with ideas on how to use the materials.

Materials can be ordered by contacting:

Freddie Thomas –
fthomas@nlc.edu 301-431-5457
Simone Roundtree –
sroundtree@nlc.edu 301-628-4858

If there is something you would like to see in the next newsletter or if you have an experience to share, call (904) 465-5091 or email yvonneh@utu851.org and include "Hazmat newsletter" as the subject line.