2015 Safety Focus

by Travis Herod
Senior Vice President, Safety and Training

Last year was, in many respects, a very good year for Watco Safety performance. As I write this, we are trending to end the year with a significantly lower Reportable Personal Injury ratio compared to prior years, and our Human Factor Incident ratio is down to its lowest level ever! These are great achievements, and something we can all be proud of. However, I don’t want us to forget, that we also suffered some significant losses last year that simply can’t be appreciated just by looking at incident numbers and ratios. On June 24th, we lost a friend and team member on the Alabama Warrior Railroad. A minor derailment resulted in fatal injuries to one of our own, and there is no greater loss than when one of our Team doesn’t get to go home. We can never forget that, and it’s imperative we learn from this incident, and ensure it never happens again. When lives are at stake, there is no minor incident!

This year we will have a significant focus on the Profit Center. That means, while we can, and will, certainly look at and celebrate combined success, the real focus will be drilled down to the local level, to celebrate those Profit Centers who are performing safely each day, and to assist and work with those Profit Centers who need help meeting local challenges, or meeting individual goals.

Safety performance is really all about individual performance. Regardless of your job, it’s important that we all commit each day to doing it as safely and efficiently as possible. Actively look for risk and take actions to reduce the risk for all tasks we perform, and look out for our other team members. Each team member individually is an important part of any Profit Center’s combined safety performance. Please commit now to an injury and accident free 2015, if each of us does our jobs safely, the location wins, the Profit Center wins, the Regions win, and the company overall wins. It comes down to individual responsibility and professionalism, doing our jobs right, safely, efficiently, and always looking for ways to improve each and every day.

New Years is always a time to reflect on the past, and commit to a new future. Make improved health and safety one of your New Year’s resolutions.

Strong safety performance has an effect on nearly all aspects of a business - healthy, safe team members result in direct reductions in cost through lower workers compensation costs, less lost productivity, reduced medical expenses, as well as indirect costs, such as lower costs for training and retraining replacement team members. There is also significant value added, through safe production - safe workplaces, with safety minded professionals tend to have higher morale, better team relationships, reduced turnover, and a much higher sense of community and pride. Let’s go into 2015 together with a commitment to continue to build that safety culture at the local level. Individually, we can create the teams that collectively win.

“What you have done, is not as important as what you are about to do!”

Thanks for all you do, and here’s to a fantastic 2015!

Watco's 32nd short line starts off the New Year

While many Watco Team Members were bringing in the New Year with noisemakers, confetti, friends and family, another group of Watco Team Members were busy bringing in railcars on Watco’s newest short line, the Bogalusa Bayou. The Bogalusa Bayou is located in Bogalusa, Louisiana, which is in the eastern part of the state.

The Bogalusa Bayou Railroad (BBAY) currently serves Bogalusa’s International Paper plant. The team’s main task will be bringing in empty railcars and then delivering the loaded cars to the Class 1 railroad, Canadian National.

Terence Snell serves as the trainmaster for Watco’s Baton Rouge Southern Railroad (BRS) and is performing duties for the BBAY as well. Snell was there when the BBAY began operations at 12:01 am on New Year’s Day. It was a great start to the New Year, according to Snell, the operations went smoothly and the team members performed their jobs safely and flawlessly.

“The only thing that wasn’t perfect was the weather,” said Snell. “The team members had a rainy, gray day for their start-up but they didn’t let that dampen their spirits.”

There are 11 team members on the BBAY team who will take care of the Customer 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There are two crews and a relief crew filling in on days off. In addition to Snell, Brit Sonnier, BRS general manager, and Wayne Matthews, BRS trainmaster, will perform cross-over duties between the two short lines. Other team members on the BBAY are: Adrian Ransfer, conductor; Andrea Baham, clerk; Douglas Smith Jr, conductor; Everett Rhea, conductor; Jerome Elzy, conductor; Jessie Bryant, conductor; Ke’Korey Gaines, conductor; Larry Johnson, trainmaster; Narada Thomas, conductor; Robert Smith, conductor; Rodney Crumedy, conductor; and Trenton Johnson, conductor. Keith Lacaze, South Region regional vice president, Ron Martin, vice president transportation safety and training and Paul Gage and Mike Rogers, South Region safety managers were on hand throughout the day to assist with the start-up as well.

The BBAY is not the first Watco short line to serve International Paper (IP). Eight other short lines touch IP in some way, they are: the Autauga Northern, Blue Ridge Southern, Grand Elk, Kaw River, Kansas & Oklahoma, Louisiana Southern, Stillwater Central, and the Vicksburg Southern railroads. In addition, Watco also provides switching services for IP in Mansfield and Prattville, Louisiana.

Marketing Manager Tim Enayati, who provides support for the switching locations said, “The relationships that have been built through the railroads and the other area switching locations in Mansfield and Prattville with IP were key in creating this new opportunity, and will continue to be in future opportunities with this great partner.”

Travis Herod, Senior Vice President, Safety and Training

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Watco’s Louisiana System Map

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Wisconsin & Southern Railroad Team gives back at Holiday Party

by Becky Baudry
Recruiter - WSOR, GDLK, and AA Railroads

Team Members at the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad (WSOR) know how to spread Christmas cheer. WSOR’s annual Holiday Party was held on December 14, 2014, and the WSOR team held a 50/50 raffle to raise money for the University of Wisconsin Children’s Hospital. Together with Watco, the WSOR Team donated $2,300 through the UW Foundation and the Greatest Need Project. The team members who were the winners of the 50/50 raffle were Car Repairman Justin Hays, $800, and Heavy Equipment Operator Richard Knilans, $200. Justin spread the Christmas spirit a little further by using his winnings to purchase Christmas gifts for a family in need in his community.

Wisconsin & Southern Railroad Team Members 2014 Holiday Party at the Crowne Plaza in Madison, Wisconsin.

Watco President Rick Baden, WSOR Heavy Equipment Operator Richard Knilans, WSOR Car Repairman Justin Hays, and WSOR Director of Operations Joe Via.

Idaho Falls Team provides Christmas cheer for a young veteran and his family

by Frank Greenough
Eastern Idaho Railroad Locomotive Mechanic

A few months ago I was approached by Brian Morgan, Eastern Idaho Railroad (EIRR) Team Safety and Improvement Committee (TS&IC) Leader and was asked if I knew of a family that could use some help for Christmas. I know there are a lot of families in each of our lives that can use some help this time of year, but for me there was only one, Josh (last name not provided for privacy). Josh is a 32 year-old that I have known since he was 15. He joined the military some time ago and did several tours over in Iraq. While serving his country and fighting for our freedom he was put up close and personal to our enemy.

Forced into becoming a man in a hurry, he did so in a short amount of time. After receiving multiple awards including the “Purple Heart” he decided enough was enough and came home. Once he came home he found out he was going to be a single dad. With everything he had to deal with while being in the war and then coming home to have more bad news dropped in his lap, he has had a rough uphill fight.

Josh is the father of two beautiful girls, 10 and 12, and has struggled with everything from PTSD, work, raising his two young girls and just every day things, but he continues to fight every day to make a better life for his daughters and takes nothing for himself.

That being said, with the help of Watco and the EIRR, the team members put together a few things to help Josh and his girls this Christmas season. They also donated the Walmart gift cards they received for Thanksgiving and EIRR General Manager Garrett Bolyard donated a prepaid Visa card.

The girls were able get some badly needed clothes, school supplies and a nice Christmas dinner. Josh came by our depot and asked me to give everyone involved a huge heartfelt thank you. I also want to say thanks to Watco-EIRR for helping out someone that is so near and dear to me, I wish you could have seen the look on his face!

Wooosh Shock locomotive "Shocks" the HO world

by Frank Greenough
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The photograph on the left shows a WAMX 4001 and a GP50-3 on the Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad (KO) waiting for a crew to start the day switching out at Frontier, Kansas. The locomotives may have a long wait in store because a crew won’t be showing up to run the train anytime soon, they couldn’t find anyone small enough.

The locomotives are HO scale, which is the most popular scale of model railway in the world. Watco Team Member Kyle Moody began working on HO scale models when he joined the Watco Team back in 2006 and has even won awards for his models at train shows. Moody said, “WAMX 4001 started out as an undecorated HO scale locomotive and I painted it in Watco’s black and yellow paint. When decals for the Wooo Shock Wichita State loco came out, I decided to model the Wichita State locomotive. For striping, repainting, and decaling, I used photos from the internet to get it as close to prototype as possible. I discovered that the decals for the mascot didn’t have the white backing on them so I had to custom cut the white background to get the decals prototypical.”

Moody is also an experienced railroad photographer and was a winner in the Watco 2015 Calendar Contest. His submission represents the month of June.

Team member locomotive "Shocks" the HO world

by Frank Greenough
Eastern Idaho Railroad Locomotive Mechanic

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Watco sponsors KCS Holiday Express stop

Although Christmas is always a magical time of year, residents at some of the locations where Watco has operations were treated to something extra special. The Kansas City Southern Railway’s Holiday Express made stops in the following towns served by Watco short lines: Baton Rouge, Pineville, and Shreveport, Louisiana; Newton and Vicksburg, Mississippi; Heaven, Oklahoma; Pittsburg, Kansas; and Kansas City, Mo. The Heaven stop will be remembered by a special couple, Emily and Tyler, who got engaged by the light of the Holiday Express elf car.

Not only is the train a fun tradition that many families have visited for 14 years, it has a charitable component as well. At each scheduled stop, the KCS Charitable Fund makes a contribution of gift cards to the local Salvation Army to provide warm clothing and other necessities for children in need. In addition to Watco Companies, other major sponsors are: Michael and Marlys Haverty Family Foundation, DST Systems, Inc., Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Bartlett Grain, and Paragon Products, LLC.

There were more than 83,700 visitors who went through the Holiday Express train this season and a total of $150,000 in gift cards were donated to the Salvation Army.

In Pittsburg, Kansas, the train came in on the South Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad and thousands of visitors stood in line with friends and family to see the Christmas-decorated rail cars and engine. Families were able to explore the different themed cars and take photos with Santa Claus. The themed cars included a smiling tank car “Rudy”; a flatcar carrying Santa’s sleigh, reindeer and a miniature village; a ginger bread boxcar; the elves’ workshop; the reindeer stable; and a little red caboose.

Local volunteers from the Heart of the Heartlands Railroad Club and the Pittsburg Area Young Professionals provided the volunteers who dressed up like elves.

Larry Spahn, Heart of the Heartlands President, said, “Despite the cold and blustery weather the attendance for the KCS Holiday Express was more than 2,500. I was told by staff members that Pittsburg had the largest number of volunteers so far this year. The Heartlands had seven members that dressed as elves and stayed until the train was moved out and on the way to Drexel, Missouri.”

Those who go through the train also get a small bag of Christmas goodies to go along with the experience.

It’s all in the detail...

It really is all in the detail, just ask Amanda Shanholtzer, Watco administrative assistant. Amanda recently discovered that Watco was being overcharged for property taxes being paid in St. Louis.

The assessor’s office was using an old list of assets and charging taxes based on that list. Amanda reviewed the list and immediately knew that the number was escalated and that several of the assets had been sold. That’s when the hard part began.

The assessor needed a list of the assets that had been sold and the date of the sale. After asking a lot of questions and doing a lot of research Amanda whittled the list down from 13 semis and 59 trailers to the final invoice showing 11 semis and 37 trailers.

“It shows how we really need to pay attention to every detail,” said Amanda. “I was pulled into the project just to list the assets by the location they were associated with and then found out that we were being charged for assets we no longer owned. It was a real eye-opener, there were 22 trailers listed on the original invoice that had been sold or transferred. “I definitely can’t take all the credit,” Amanda added. “I had the help of several team members to get the matter resolved. The team members at each location, including the Pittsburg Warehouse, Rockford, Oklahoma City, St Louis, and Glendale all played their part in helping me verify what they actually had compared to what the assessor’s list was saying we had. Other team members that played a part in helping me search for the information were Teri Kinyon, Sam Ricci, and Adam Hanson. When I couldn’t find anything on a bill of sale, they went through the information that they had and helped me find the bill of sale dates to provide to the assessor. So honestly it was a group effort. I just started asking the questions until I found the right answer.”

Dan Smith, Chief Operating Officer, said, “This type of dedication is what we need to improve our bottom line at every single profit center. Thanks, Amanda, for your dedication and continued focus on our asset inventory. We need to ensure that our profit centers catch these issues in real time so that we maintain these improvements for many years to come.”
While many of the Watco Team Members were preparing for Christmas, there was a group down in Refugio, Texas, who were busy taking the Watco 101 Leadership and Management course. The class in Refugio began on December 9th and ended the 11th.

“We originally thought it was just going to be made up of Refugio Team Members but then a few others signed up,” said Hatcher. “The blend of the team members who were comfortable with each other and then having a few from other areas gave the class a good dynamic and they worked well together.”

To make the classes more efficient for the teams, Watco U instructors, Nick Weber, Training Specialist, and Cris Hatcher, Training and Development Manager, have been taking their classes on the road.

“There are some real benefits to taking the courses to the team,” said Hatcher. “It’s really hard to lose one or two team members for a week while they’re in class and traveling, especially at the smaller locations.”

Hatcher and Weber have been working on the 2015 class schedule and have 11 days booked for classes with room to add additional classes as needed. For Watco U purposes, the country was divided up into five regions and each region will host one Watco 101 course and one Team Safety and Improvement Committee training class.

Team members who attended the Watco 101 Class in Refugio, Texas were: back row (l-r) Josh Joslín, GPIP Material Handling; Richard Manes, Refugio; James Moore, Pacific Sun Railroad; Matthew Andrade, Refugio, and Roman Salazar, Refugio. Front row (l-r) Toya Bradley, WTPS South HRM; Jimmy Vargas, Refugio; Rito Zertuche, Refugio; Jessica Mitchel, Refugio, Amanda Smardo, South Region Recruiter, and Jessica Cancino, Refugio.

As part of the job, team members are constantly on the lookout for signs of problems with the track, equipment or environmental issues that could be a danger. Blue Ridge Southern Railroad (BLU) Conductor Van Hutchins and Engineer John Honaker, ran into such a problem and averted a potential derailment.

The two were switching Evergreen Paper in Canton, North Carolina, at 3 am in the morning and Hutchins noticed something just didn’t look right about the rail in a road crossing within the plant. Hutchins asked Honaker to come back and take a look with him in the dark, with only lanterns to illuminate the area. Both agreed there was something seriously wrong. They found a six inch section of rail had apparently been broken out, and created a serious potential for a derailment. While six inches may seem like an easy find, the darkness and the break being between two crossing timbers made the break hard to spot. The track is one of the busiest tracks that the BLU runs on and lots of traffic passes over this location every day, mostly coal loads.

The situational awareness displayed by Hutchins to see the broken rail in the dark, in a road crossing, and the Crew Resource Management displayed by both Team Members in the decision making process, are a perfect example of a crew working together to serve our Customers safely each and every day! Both Hutchins and Honaker have been with the BLU since startup, Conductor Hutchins came to the BLU from the Norfolk Southern, and Engineer Honaker previously worked on Watco’s Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad.

Blue Ridge General Manager Darl Farris said, “I am very proud of our team members for overcoming the potential distractions of the holiday season and providing safe and efficient service to our Customers. The track condition that was identified and avoided could easily been overlooked by someone less attentive to the task at hand.”

Both team members were rewarded for their diligence and attention to detail. They are definitely not “in the dark” when it comes to safety!
This section is dedicated to the Watco Team Members to give you a chance to share what's happening in your corner of the Watco World.

A rare siting of Louisiana fans with an Arkansas fan. Watco Team Members Brandon Eddleman, left, and Danyale Norman, the only Razorback, enjoy a cold day in Fayetteville, Arkansas, with friends. Brandon is a location manager in DeRidder, Louisiana and Danyale is a location manager in El Dorado, Arkansas.

Danyale most likely enjoyed the outcome of this game more, Arkansas beat LSU 17-0.

Year of the Profit Center

The year 2015 is the year of the Profit Center. This means the Profit Centers will be the drivers of their own and Watco’s success. Profit Centers will be empowered to work safer and smarter and they will benefit from the choices they make.

The Dispatch would like to focus on the Profit Center as well and your help is needed. Send photos and stories on how your Profit Center is working wisely, hitting safety goals, and how you are celebrating your wins.

Our Team Members are making great things happen and others can learn from solutions you have found, so please, share your success! Send e-mails to tvan@watcocompanies.com.

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Congratulations to the following team members celebrating their anniversaries!

1 Year: Ryan Arnold, Austin Athchison, Luther Booth, Timothy Briese, Thomas Caffall, Jonathan Carrillo, Nick Coomes, Timothy Covington, Kolby Crawford, James Crowder, Randy Curl, Josh Davies, Jarvis Davis, De’Shoner Davison, Gregory Drapeau, Calvin Foster, Brandt Frydenlund, Lance Gates, Charles Gibson, Joshua Gillmore, Jeremey Grosstephan, Amanda Haggerty, Alexander Hall, Jeffery Hamilton, Thomas Held, Wendell Held, Darvis Hicks, Shana Hilsher, Mark Jackson, Andrew Jones, Michael Kawano, Kim Levans, Connie Lipsett, Bryan Lundberg, Dorothy Maupin, Terry McCloud, Hector Medina, Jessica Nelson, Timothy Nunley, Jermaine O’Connor, Dane Olsen, Buddy Olera, John Peace, Brad Peot, Lewis Peshlakai, Randy Reisenauer, Rickie Renke, Gustavia Robinson, Theodore Savage, Larry Shavers, Brandon Simmons, Nicholas Stout, Perry Thomas, Jonathan Thompson, Travis Ward, Carlos Williams, Johnny Williams, Jared Yahnner, Ray Younger

2 Years: Michael Barajas, Michael Caligan, Robert Campbell, Jared Carman, John Dellingher, Victoria Fangman, Gregory Ferguson, Willie Green, Jonathan Hamm, Matthew Hayes, Kenneth Hogarth, Jacob Huntasinger, Richard Lakoduk, Travis Luinstra, James Lundy, Kevin Martin, Samuel Mastorovich, Curtis Neufeld, Preston Page, Morgan Ruggles, Kelly Sanders, Matthew Story, Tina Swallow, John Thaxton, Todd Trammell, Wesley Wasden, Joseph Whitsaker, Christopher White, Cyle Windsor, Brody Wolff, Michael Yoger

3 Years: Gretchen Ankeny, Ron Bird, Kenneth Brown, Bryan Castellano, Edward Garza, Justin Haisch, Jeffrey Hart, Kris Hawley, Benjamin Hillner, Bryan House, Russell Koczur, Jacob Langford, Todd Peterson, Timothy Schaffer, Lee Smith, Marcos Soto, Devin Sandsbak

4 Years: John Anderson, Miranda Anselmi, Raymond Bowen, Nicholas Bushhardt, Jeremy Byford, Daniel Caine, Nathan Champion, Lucas Cummings, Israel Garza, Bill Goldsberry, Daniel Harkness, Benjamin Immel, Thearan Page, Todd Vaughan

5 Years: William Casselman, Ricky Hollis, Seth Morris, Keith Owens, Clinton Schipper

6 Years: Michael Kertz, James McCoy, Steve Smardo, Chad Taylor, Raymond Warrington

7 Years: Ricky Carter, Donald Lake, Gina Williams

8 Years: Joshua Beaudry, Ron Close, Steve Iseli, Amy Miori, Frank Nichols, Doug Whalen, Jason Wood

9 Years: Derek Brown, James Brown, Lewis Burlison, William Chase, Carol Cook, Johnny Fields, Michael Gray, Anthony Kirkland, Eddie Lapine, Joshua Leslie, Jason Welch, George Yellott

10 Years: Shasta Duffey, David Fontaine, Matt Heeren

11 Years: Gary Griswold, Brian Pflughoefl

12 Years: Fallyne Deao

13 Years: Jim Fearmonti, Macaulley Morse, Samuel Winegarner

14 Years: James Brewer, Kenneth Parkin, Melinda VanBuren

17 Years: Justin Cox, Mark Walker

18 Years: Roger Kelley, Artis Smith

19 Years: Kelly King

20 Years: Shannon Kniisle, Rob Thrall

22 Years: Sherlyn Graham, Santiago Montoya, Charles Shope, Milburn Stewart

23 Years: John Falk

24 Years: Kirk Hawley

27 Years: Paul Swanson

28 Years: John Beilfuss, Michael Roknich, John Smet

30 Years: Kenneth Clemmons

38 Years: Tex Inman

39 Years: Steve Rhodes

Visit the new Watco web site at www.watcocompanies.com
Pittsburg students rewarded with train ride

Teachers are always looking for ways to reward their students for the hard work they do throughout the year and the teachers at two Pittsburg, Kansas, elementary schools had a very special reward for their hard-working students, a train ride. Students at Lakeside and Westside schools had to turn in 90 percent of their homework in reading and math classes to earn a ticket to ride on the train their pajamas - Polar Express style. Mother Nature even pitched in and provided a light dusting of snow.

On December 18th, the students and their teachers boarded the train for a 45-minute ride. It was an opportunity many had never had before. "For many of the kids, it’s their first time on a train," said Kathy Carr, Watco Team Member. "And for some, it’ll be the last time. I asked some kids if they’d ever been on a train before, and they all said no."

Each school had their own train ride and there were 254 riders from Westside and 241 from Lakeside. The kids were able to experience the ride thanks to Watco and the volunteers from the Heart of the Heartlands Railroad Club. The volunteers perform a variety of duties to ensure that the passengers enjoy a safe and interesting ride. Conductors dressed in 1950's uniforms helped the children board the train and "punched" their tickets.

"Nobody wanted to miss the train ride and everyone worked really hard," said Susie Ledbetter, paraeducator at Westside Elementary. "If this is what we need to do to help the kids work hard and try to do well in school then I’m willing to do my part," said Carr. "There are so many distractions to keep kids from doing well, this is a different kind of thing to offer the kids who try hard. It’s not something they can just get at a store."

Heartland Club Members John Shomin and Tom Johnston help the kids board the passenger train.

Pittsburg train ride

Helping with the school train ride were Heartland of the Heartlands (HOH) Club Members Jim McKeel, Bill Collins, and John Shomin. John Chambers, Watco team member; Tom Johnston, HOH; Kathy Carr, Watco team member; Larry Spahn, HOH President, and Randy Letner, SKOL trainmaster. Not pictured, Casey Steinmiller, Watco team member.

Students waiting to get their tickets punched, enjoying a different view of their hometown, and boarding the train. The train heading into Pittsburg, Kansas, to pick up the special passengers.