When Carol and Dale Cook purchased their dream home on five acres outside Cheney, Kansas, they imagined living there the rest of their days.

Carol, has been a Watco dispatcher for 10 years, while Dale works as a plumber. "We bought it on a foreclosure, and it had the windows blasted out of it with shotguns. Trash was laying around," Carol said of that day several years ago. "But we could see the potential."

Now, Carol knows her time living in their home is limited; she was diagnosed last summer with terminal cancer. But she's grateful to be able to have moved in just in time for Christmas, and credits fellow Watco team members — many of whom were strangers — for making it happen.

Derailed
“Little by little, Dale worked on this place for five years to make it livable," Carol recalled.

He installed new windows, completed the master bedroom suite with heated floors in the master bath, and tackled other bedrooms upstairs, as well.

They couldn’t live in the house while he renovated it, so the couple took up residency in an outbuilding they called the bunkhouse.

Then, in June, Carol began experiencing pain in her hip. A doctor diagnosed it as bursitis. But a second opinion and an x-ray showed a tumor in her leg that was eating the bone.

“Two days later, I was in the hospital for surgery to ...to have her house finished before Christmas, ” Carol said. "Time was really limited for Dale as to when he could work on it," Carol said.

Her supervisor, Lisa Berry, questioned Carol about the progress.

“We have the materials," Carol told her. "We're just not done." A gift of help

When the Grand Elk Railroad (GDLK) team in Kalamazoo, Michigan, learned of Carol’s illness, they asked what they could do to help. The answer?

"...to have her house finished before Christmas," recalled GDLK Trainmaster David Lawson.

Lawson and GDLK Track Inspector John Rood pitched the idea of going to Kansas to the rest of their team. Senior Vice President Steve Coomes gave them the go-ahead, and they loaded up a truck with tools.

"I personally enjoy any aspect of construction," Lawson said, "but more than that I love helping someone in need."

He put up drywall. Lubbock and Western Railway (LBWR)/Texas and New Mexico Railway (TXNR) General Manager J.J. Carman laid reclaimed walnut flooring.

Other Watco team members learned of the project and descended on Cheney from across the region: Wisconsin, Texas, Kansas, and beyond.

Wisconsin & Southern Railroad’s Stacey Hurda and Brent Lubkeman, Safety Manager Lucas Conrad, Kansas & Oklahoma Railroad (KO) Locomotive Mechanic Super Cory Miller and KO Senior Trainmaster Joseph Patalano, and dispatchers Angel Pridemore, Toni Scroggins, Tandi Colibert, Amanda Pequin, and Stephanie Moore, were among those who helped.

“I have always been proud to work for this great company, but this project has really opened my eyes of just how great it really is," Lawson said.

Kari Stephens, assistant chief dispatcher with Carol for 10 years, took on cleanup duties.

”She’s not only a co-worker, she’s a friend," Stephens said of Carol. "It’s my honor to help her out; she would have done the same for anyone.”

Seeing Carol smiling brought her joy, she said. Stephens also learned a lot in the process.

“It brought a lot of things into perspective," Stephens said. "Life is short, and I know it’s cliché, but live each day to the fullest and don’t be selfish.”

Carol recalled a meaningful moment during the project.

“Rick Webb (Watco CEO) stopped by to visit,” she said. "I just thought that was fantastic.” ‘Angels’
The Cooks moved in a week before Christmas, and Berry and fellow dispatchers brought a Christmas tree and decorated it.

"It’s beautiful," Carol said, choking back tears. “They went above and beyond.”

While Carol is now content to be living in their home, she misses working.

"With this job, it was never a question about wanting to go in and start work on time," she said. “I always looked forward to it. It’s hard to sit here and imagine that I can’t go back. Be grateful for where you’re working; you’ll never find a better company.”

She finds comfort, though, she said, in reflecting on the generosity of her fellow team members.

“‘They’re my angels,” Carol said. "They just did a wonderful job.””

“I was so overwhelmed. Watco people are just terrific people. But I knew that from the beginning. They treat you more like family. A team. And that made me want to work there. They've become my friends and my family.” - Renovation photos on page 6
Watco Companies spreads holiday cheer

by Michaela Kinyon
Contributing Writer

Christmas is in the air all around the nation, as various Watco railroads and locations do what they can to participate in the holiday season. All sorts of people have geared up to promote the Christmas spirit with young and old alike, helping people create fun times and lasting memories. Here's a look at just some of the ways that Watco Companies brought in the holiday cheer.

Polar Express train rides held on three Watco short lines

Watco Partner Iowa Pacific Holdings operates several Polar Express rides throughout the country. Three of those rides were offered on Watco short lines; the Stillwater Central Railroad, the Lubbock and Texas Railway, and the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad.

Polar Express in Oklahoma
One of the many places where Christmas train rides took place last month was in Bristow, Oklahoma, with an Iowa Pacific train on the Stillwater Central Railroad (SLWC) line. Team members Teri Kinyon, asset account-ant, and Michaela Kinyon, Dispatch contributing writer, both rode the train along with their family. Hot chocolate and cookies were served by dancing chefs, The Polar Express book was read, and the Conductor came through to punch all of the children's golden tickets.

Children were invited to wear their pajamas on the train, just like in the movie, and there was reportedly a hobo sighting or two while aboard. Upon reaching the North Pole, Santa and his elves boarded the train, and each of the children received a special gift: a bell.

“When Santa asked me what the magic word was, I said ‘please,’ but it was actually ‘believe’, said Morgan Meiwes, Teri Kinyon's 11-year-old niece. Morgan's sister Bailey Meiwes and cousins Jessie and Callie Myers all enjoyed seeing Santa as well.

When asked about his thoughts on working on the Polar Express, Ray-Dean Canfield stated, “I would do this for free if they would let me. The kids all start off quiet, but by the end it's like a rock concert. You can honestly feel the magic of Christmas.”

Polar Express in Texas
A little further south, the Lubbock and Western Railway (LBWR) was also hosting the Polar Express. This is the 8th year that the Polar Express has been offered to residents of the Lubbock area.

The train departed from the Wolfforth depot and approximately 33 rides were offered and just like the ride in Oklahoma, pajama clad youngsters (and some brave adults) boarded the train for storytelling, hot chocolate, and cookies.

LBWR General Manager JJ Carman took his family on the ride. He said, “My kids were ecstatic with the ride especially because they have been around trains for years and never have experienced riding a train of this caliber. What made it special is to allow my granddaughter to ride with us because she is two and she just loved seeing Santa. I think that all of the families were enjoying themselves on the ride and you could hear all of the kids laughing and having fun.”

A December 26th ride was cancelled due to a record snow of 11 inches that began falling on the 26th and ended on the 28th.

Polar Express in Wisconsin
The Watco location closest to the North Pole that hosted a Polar Express ride was the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad (WSOR). There were 78 total train rides offered, during which two trips were offered exclusively for WSOR team members on December 5th and 13th.

“Everyone seemed to have a great time,” stated Ken Lucht, director of Government Relations. “In total, both trips accommodated over 500 people from WSOR, team members and their families.”

Dancing chefs, singing elves, and a special gift from Santa accompanied the events, as well as the invitation for children to wear their pajamas just like in the movie. The train ride departed from Middleton, Wisconsin and took about an hour to get to the North Pole and back.

“The WSOR is pleased to provide this unique experience to thousands of young children and adults during the Holiday Season,” stated Lucht. “Being involved in the communities we serve is important to our business, and in many cases, memorable to all young children for years to come.”

The Cherryvale Santa Train

Three, one-hour rides took place from the Cherryvale, Kansas, depot, during which Santa and Mrs. Claus visited with the children and gave each of them a small bell. Nearly seven hundred people rode on the train, and members of the Heart of the Heartland Train Club dressed as conductors and helped passengers get on and off the trains.

Hot chocolate was provided by the Cherryvale Explorer group, who also worked on cleaning and decorating the passenger cars. According to Larry Spahn, Heart of the Heartland Train Club President, the Cherryvale Police Chief Perry Lambert was instrumental in working out the details of the ride. The Heart of the Heartland Train Club also traveled as far as Wichita, Kansas, and Nevada, Missouri to help bring the joy to children all over the midwest.

Spahn continued, “The passenger trains provide an excellent way for Watco to interact directly with the public and also provides many persons their first opportunity to ride a ‘real’ train. It is gratifying to watch the faces of the youngsters as they press their faces to the window in an effort to see more of everything that is passing by.”
First Graders Ride the Watco Christmas Train

First grade students from all over Pittsburg, Kansas flocked to the railroad on December 10th to ride the Watco Christmas Express. This ride, sponsored by the All Aboard Foundation, not only helped spread the Christmas spirit but also encouraged railroad safety.

This ride was not an isolated incident. In fact, it lasted all week. Monday, all Pittsburg USD 250 first grade classrooms watched *The Polar Express* to get the kids excited about the upcoming train ride. Then Tuesday, an Operation Lifesaver volunteer went to the classrooms and gave a presentation and showed a video on rail safety.

“The safety part of the week was really important to us,” stated Brad Snow, President of the All Aboard Foundation. “We want to teach kids how to be safe around railroad tracks.”

Thursday, December 10th, at 9 a.m., the kids showed up in their pajamas and armed with their golden ticket. They boarded the train and were given a cookie from Marrone’s Foods and a bottle of water from Ron’s IGA.

The train ride was 30 minutes, and Santa Claus, waved to the kids from a bucket truck as they passed Westar Energy. After the train ride, the kids were given a bell with a quote from *The Polar Express* attached to it, “The bell still rings for those who truly believe.”

“Giving back to the community is extremely important to us,” said Snow. “Eighty to ninety percent of these kids had never been on a train before, and it was a very fun event for them.”

The SKOL operations team as well as the Heart of the Heartlands Train Club each gave of their time, helping to operate the train and punch the golden tickets for the kids. The USD 250 administration team also did a great deal of work to organize the event.

“Seeing the smiles on the kids’ faces was what it’s all about for us,” concluded Snow.

KCS Holiday Express stops in Pittsburg

This year’s Kansas City Southern (KCS) Holiday Express made a stop in Pittsburg, Kansas, allowing people to walk through and see all the elves, model trains, and Christmas memorabilia in a fun and magical atmosphere. The train travels through different towns along the KCS lines throughout the country, using local volunteers to help out as Santa’s elves.

With the help of Gold Sponsors such as Watco Companies, gift cards are given to The Salvation Army at stops along the Holiday Express route. The gift cards are designated for the purchase of warm clothing and other necessities for kids in need. This year a total of $159,000 in gift cards was distributed along the route.

The 2015 KCS Holiday Express theme is Darby Bear. The Heart of the Heartlands Railroad Club was eager to help out, and team member Amber Gardner, People Service Coordinator, worked with them to bring the Christmas joy to the families of Pittsburg. “My uncle is the president of the Heart of the Heartlands Train Club, so I asked him if I could help out,” Gardner said.

“I loved being able to see the kids, shake their hands, welcome them, and wish them a Merry Christmas,” she continued. “It was just awesome.”

This year, the train had a record turnout of 3,040 people. Families stood in a long line to take part on an unusually warm December 10th.

“Watching the line of people who came to this was amazing,” Gardner said. “This is something that everyone needs to experience, and I look forward to doing this every year.”

A BLU Christmas

Active participation in the community is an incredibly important part of Blue Ridge Southern Railroad (BLU) team members’ year, especially around Christmas time. BLU team members geared up and shipped out, driving three railroad vehicles proudly decorated and operated by BLU team members with support from family and friends, including other BLU team members.

The parade took place on December 3rd in Canton, North Carolina. “It was all pretty fun,” stated TSIC Member Brandon Parham. “We just lined up and went through the town.”

Participants in the parade shared hot dogs, chips, brownies, soda, and hot chocolate before and after the parade at the Canton depot. “It was a great time to visit with each other about holiday plans and family traditions,” said Darl Farris, BLU general manager.

The weather that day was wonderful, although Farris reports that it was a little chilly. Including the BLU, there were over 130 entries in the parade this year, ending in the usual appearance of Santa Claus. Supporters bundled up outside of the depot, grabbing the occasional piece of candy tossed to them by the people in the parade, and cheered for their favorites. “Of course, we cheered the loudest for our own BLU trucks,” said Farris.

“The parade was great,” said Parham. “I love being able to take pride in my company and show off the BLU to the community. The TSIC is trying to get more active in the community to show that we are not just part of the railroad track, but we get out and support the community. We want to take care of the place for the future team members and our families.”

TSIC Member Joseph Edwards was also present at the parade, driving one of the vehicles in it, which he says was his favorite part of the event. “It was good to be able to show the community that BLU is not going to go anywhere. We’re here to stay.”

Edwards continued “As a company, we care about the community...” - Continued on page 8
BLU family member organizes coat drive

By Andra Bryan Stefanoni
Contributing Writer

Alone on a dark street in downtown Asheville, North Carolina, as temperatures dipped below 40 degrees, a man prayed that someone would offer him warmth.

At that moment, Allbre Edwards and her family pulled up in a car packed with coats, blankets, socks, and hats to distribute to homeless veterans.

“He said his prayers were answered,” Allbre recalled.

Allbre, who is married to Blue Ridge Southern Railroad (BLU) Train Mechanic Joseph Edwards, works for an organization that houses homeless vets across 10 counties.

“We find them on the streets and in cars,” she said. “There are men and women, single and married, and some with kids. It’s a neat job, but it puts a lump in my throat.”

With the onset of winter, Allbre wanted to conduct a coat drive for them.

“I wanted to help,” she said. “I’m warm at night. I want others to be, too.”

“A lot of vets either aren’t quite ready to go into housing or can’t get in, and may be on the street for a couple more months. We wanted to make sure they were warm.”

Watco’s depot in Canton, North Carolina, was the perfect centralized location for collecting winter gear. Allbre posted flyers around the depot and advertised on Facebook that donations of new and gently used items were being accepted. BLU General Manager Darl Farris provided support, and help and donations began rolling in.

“The response from the local community was amazing,” Farris said.

Walking the streets of Asheville, the Edwards family, fellow team members, friends, and relatives distributed winter weather gear to anyone who needed warmth. The Edwards’ 2-year-old son, Ryan “Chunky” Edwards, handed out candy canes.

“Some were really hesitant and told us they didn’t need anything,” Allbre said. “Others were emotional and so thankful.”

Through Allbre’s connections, they also distributed the gear to the families of veterans in need of assistance.

“By giving that one child a coat, it will not only keep him warm, it will provide more opportunities than we would ever be able to imagine,” Allbre said, noting that some families won’t send their children to school without winter gear for fear that Social Services will get involved. “That child can then go to school, get an education, and become a successful member of society.”

And by giving veterans winter gear, Edwards said, “It will show him or her that even with mental health issues, people do still care and want to make sure they are warm.”

Farris said he was proud to count Joseph Edwards and his family as part of the Watco team.

Allbre said the project was the right thing to do.

“They are our most deserving population,” she said. “They served us, and now it’s our turn to serve them.”

Team member spreads safety message

By Andra Bryan Stefanoni
Contributing Writer

When Revenue Accounting Specialist Lou Shoemaker presented a career session last spring at the Kelce College of Business at Pittsburg State University, she began it like Watco begins every session:

With a safety briefing.

She didn’t know that by doing so, she’d inspire a department chair to invest in life-saving equipment and staff training he hadn’t realized they might need.

“Whenever we have meetings of any sort, we always do a safety briefing,” Shoemaker said. “We go over where the exits are, the number of people in the room, what to do in case of fire or tornado, where the first aid kit is located, who is certified in CPR, and we always note where the AEDs are.”

An AED, or an automated external defibrillator, is a portable electronic device that automatically diagnoses life-threatening cardiac arrhythmias of ventricular fibrillation and ventricular tachycardia. The device is able to treat a person experiencing one of those conditions with electrical therapy that stops the arrhythmia, allowing the heart to reestablish an effective rhythm.

“But when I asked about AEDs, the accounting department chair — Dr. Peter Rosen — said they didn’t have any,” Shoemaker said. “They decided they’d better get one.

“A big priority in our company is always being safe. What if someone had a heart attack? What if a student collapses?”

Shoemaker, whose mother worked for the ambulance service in Watco’s home base of Crawford County, Kansas, for 23 years, knew that an AED could provide the care that’s needed until an ambulance arrives.

“Dr. Rosen went above and beyond after our conversation and not only got AEDs put in the building, he made sure the staff is now trained in CPR and first aid and how to use the AEDs,” said Shoemaker, a Spring 2015 graduate of the College of Business.

“It was neat that my talk had a positive outcome I hadn’t expected.”

Did you know?

Are you using a lot of data on your personal or business iPhone?

If you go to “Settings,” then choose “Cellular.” You’ll see a toggle setting called “WiFi Assist.”

“It will make it look like you’re using WiFi, but actually will pull from the data plan instead of using WiFi if your connection is not strong,” said Penny Wood, Watco purchase card and cell phone administrator.

The downside: If it’s turned on, you’ll use large amounts of data.

Wood advises toggling it to “off” in order to save. iPhone users also can turn off voice roaming in the same section of “Settings” in order to avoid charges when traveling internationally or near an international border, and can deactivate data roaming when traveling to avoid charges when web browsing, using email, MMS, and other data services.

Also, connect to the WiFi at the location you are at when possible to increase data speed and decrease the data being used by the phone itself.
Wisconsin team members respond to emergency

By Michaela Kinyon
Contributing Writer

As much as Watco Companies attempts to train its employees to avoid accidents entirely, despite all efforts, sometimes emergencies happen. In these situations, it is important for the team members to be prepared to react in the best possible manner, such as when Wisconsin & Southern Railroad’s Engineer Gary Sanderson and Conductor Charles Montgomery assisted a man with dementia who was driving on the railroad tracks.

It was just after midnight on a cloudy evening near Ingle-side, Illinois, when the accident occurred. Montgomery was talking to dispatch at the time, “I was in the process of repeating back cancellation, and as I glanced up, I saw headlights in my front door window.”

Thinking it was just a reflection, Montgomery continued talking to dispatch. “I slowly came to the realization that it wasn’t a reflection and with dispatch still on the phone, started to say ‘Uh, oh, UH, OH! Gary, dump it! Dump it!”’

“I put the train in emergency as soon as I saw the car coming at us,” said Sanderson.

The engine, which had been travelling at 20 miles per hour previously, struck the car. Montgomery described the sound as “similar to when you return a shopping cart at the store.” The vehicle spun around and into the ditch.

Gathering his coat, gloves, radio, and lantern, Montgomery got off the train to check on the vehicle as Sanderson called for police, fire, and medical assistance. Montgomery approached the car, which was about a quarter of a mile back from the engine, and attempted to help the man out of his car.

Sanderson, who kept in touch with emergency services while Montgomery was busy, said, “It was a small miracle the car didn’t explode or crumple, killing the driver.”

“I could hear the engine turning over as I approached, and I could smell gas as well,” said Montgomery. “I shined my lantern inside and saw an elderly man still trying to start his car.”

The door of the car wouldn’t open, and the windows would not roll down. Finding a piece of metal lying on the ground next to the vehicle, Montgomery told the man to cover his eyes as he broke the passenger window, pulling the man out and away from the vehicle.

By this time, the EMS had arrived, and the man was placed in their care. The man was known by the local EMS, and suffers from dementia. He had driven down the railroad track thinking that he was “taking a side road back home.”

Montgomery attributes his fast response to his military training. “One must remain calm and check the scene carefully to avoid and increase danger to the victim and themselves as well,” he said.

Because of Sanderson and Montgomery’s fast and efficient response to the situation, everyone will make it out okay. The gentleman ended up with just a few scratches, and the only damage to the lead locomotive was a left front plow cover broken off, which only cost $300 to repair.

“Towner continued, “The minimal damage was up to the good Lord and a lot of luck on the man’s part,” concluded Sanderson.

Lubbock and Western Railway honored at luncheon

By Michaela Kinyon
Contributing Writer

Watco Companies focus on economic development was made especially apparent by the recent award received by the Lubbock and Western Railway (LBWR), which was given to them at the 2nd annual Levelland Appreciation Luncheon on December 3rd.

Jared Carman, LBWR’s General Manager, and Kurtis Lindsey, Marketing Manager of TXNR, PSVR, and LBWR, attended the event. The luncheon was hosted by the Levelland Economic Development Corp. and sponsored by Xcel Energy. The purpose of the luncheon was to “recognize [companies] that drive Levelland’s economy.” After the lunch, there was an economic development update, followed by the awards ceremony.

When asked why he thought LBWR received this award, Stu Towne, EVP of Service Assurance and Asset Management, stated, “Watco’s entrepreneurial focus allows us to look at all opportunities and find strategic and innovative ways of adding value for all stakeholders. This, along with our team’s integrity and commitment to daily execution of the operating plan in a safe and efficient manner led to LBWR receiving the award.”

Towner continued, “This award was in recognition of the community cleanup effort that we lead, along with the investment in a large switching lead for the Levelland Industrial Park after our acquisition of LBWR in mid-July.”

According to Lindsey, there were not many qualifications in particular that led to the decision on who would receive the award, but rather “an overall overlook on business in the area. The award was presented to two companies that have demonstrated a long-term commitment to the continued economic growth of the greater Levelland area.”

The other recipient of the award was Pipeline Plastics, which is another rail Customer of LBWR. The luncheon was well-attended, with many local business and community leaders, as well as the local Chamber of Commerce.

When asked what his favorite part of the event was, Lindsey stated, “The part I enjoyed most was the unveiling of a new ad campaign by Levelland Economic Development Corp. to attract new business…. It is clear that a healthy community such as Levelland will directly benefit the success of the railroad.”
With all of the bad weather the country has been experiencing in the past week, it is important to ensure that all equipment and transportation is taken care of and protected against the cold. Knowing this, a group of team members at the terminal in Loving, New Mexico went out into blizzard-like conditions to check their equipment over the weekend on December 26th and 27th.

The terminal was closed for business because of the weekend and the Christmas holiday, and the area was experiencing its worst storm since 1997, but that didn't stop the dedicated team members that made it out to the terminal to get to work. A total of two feet of snow fell with drifts that were 4-7 ft. tall.

Those that were able to make it to the terminal in the conditions took the time necessary to secure the facility and turn on the transloaders, locomotives, and shuttle wagon. The machinery was run for some time to ensure that it didn't freeze in the storm.

Doug Manuel, Senior Vice President of Terminal Operations, compared the conditions to hurricane duty in the Gulf Coast. “This was a great job done by a dedicated staff and team.”

When asked why the team members braved such a strong storm, Terminal Manager David Elizalde stated matter-of-factly: “Customer first. That’s one of our foundation principles, and we had to take care of the equipment in order to do that.”

Elizalde continued to speak well of his team members, “I'm very proud of the team members that made it out here. They went above and beyond what Watco asks of them, and they did it out of the kindness of their hearts in order to secure the facility and check the equipment. The storm could’ve done a lot of damage.”

Team members that came on Sunday, December 27th were Blake Thomas, Seven Lewis, Dustin Bratcher, Timothy Rautenburg, Katy Grider, Matthew Martinez, Manuel Mendoza, Enrico Morales, Brandon Campbell, and Alberto Ornelas.

“I have one of the best crews out here,” remarked Elizalde.

Loving, New Mexico Team Member Timothy Rautenburg, braves blizzard conditions in order to ensure the equipment was taken care of at the terminal so they could serve their Customer as soon as weather permitted.

A number of people came from far and wide and pooled their talents to give Dispatcher Carol Cook a most wonderful gift, Christmas in her farmhouse. Below are photos of the dining room and kitchen before and after completion. Also pictured is the living room and top right is JJ Carman, general manager for the Lubbock and Western Railway and the Texas & New Mexico Railway. JJ laid most of the flooring on the main level of the farmhouse. Below JJ is Brent Lubke-King from the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad. Brent spent a whole day in that tiny bathroom tearing out the tile and cabinets. The photo to the left of Brent is of John Rood, Grand Elk Railroad, and Dispatchers Kari Stephens, and Toni Scroggins. John stayed for almost the entire duration of the restoration. Thanks to these team members and the many others who helped out!
CBH Group's Colin Tutt retires

By Andra Bryan Stefanoni
Contributing Writer

The person largely responsible for putting Watco Companies on the map in Western Australia has retired, sparking reflections and congratulations from those who worked with him.

It was 2010 when Colin Tutt was tasked with leading the team to choose a rail provider that could meet CBH’s changing needs in the land down under after deregulation of the grain and rail industries there.

“It really took a lot of courage and vision by him. There’s out-of-the-box thinking, and then there’s wayout-of-the-box thinking,” said Watco’s Chief Commercial Officer Ed McKechnie. “This is beyond way out-of-the-box.”

“When we brought in a rail provider from North America, and then for CBH to invest in the rail cars and locomotives and have them shipped, was a very bold move.”

At that time, exports had nothing to do with market demand. Changing it to meet Customer needs based on global market conditions meant changing the supply chain and thus transportation.

“It might go from 1 million pounds one month to several million pounds another month,” McKechnie said.

“But what this move did was give CBH the ability to control their own destiny, and made them a permanent player in the Australian grain market.”

It also gave Watco a presence in the southern hemisphere; today, that includes a fleet of 21 locomotives and 700 grain cars.

“It was a risk, and Colin was brave to take it, but it panned out for everyone,” McKechnie said.

Tutt, a 41-year veteran with CBH, impressed Jim Griffith, who joined Watco in late June 2011 as rail chief commercial officer in Western Australia. He said Tutt’s leadership style was unparalleled.

He recalled Tutt taking him under his wing to impart knowledge of the Western Australia grain industry. In introducing him to the region’s farmers and their families, as well as CBH team members, Tutt impressed Griffith because he remembered names and pertinent personal events for each.

“His traits of being an empowering leader with vision was powerful for both CBH and Watco,” noted McKechnie. “We have thousands of Customers. But Colin was one of those guys that is especially memorable.”

Congratulations, Colin, on your retirement!

Project Management Team designs GBW upgrades

By Andra Bryan Stefanoni
Contributing Writer

Recent facility upgrades by the Watco Project Management Team for GBW Railcar Services at a railcar repair shop in Fitzgerald, Georgia, are a first for the industry and will yield benefits to both GBW and its Customers.

Watco Companies joined with Greenbrier in 2014 in a 50/50 railcar repair venture to respond directly to existing Customers and the marketplace. The venture, which includes a combined network of 33 railcar repair, refurbishment and maintenance shops, makes GBW the largest independent railcar repair shop network in North America. It’s also the one of the only repair shop networks to service almost the entire range of railcar types in the North American fleet.

“Our team of 2,200 members works on railcars every day,” said GBW Railcar Services Vice President Andy Schaffer, a 35-year veteran of the railcar repair industry. That includes cleaning interiors to remove chemicals, applying a new interior coating and exterior finish, and preparing each car for any needed mechanical repairs.

GBW plans to capitalize on the increased demand for federally-mandated tank car recertification, which requires that every tank car in North America undergo a battery of inspection requirements at least once every 10 years.

That recertification is expected to steadily accelerate through 2018, when more than 49,000 required tank car certifications are expected.

The project management team designed and oversaw the construction of the Fitzgerald facility upgrades, which are computer controlled. The team also designed and built the inspection area.

Schaffer praised the team’s work and said the facility was not only a first for the industry, it was top of the line in design and construction.

The inspection facility is innovative in that the shop can provide a more in-depth review of railcar condition prior to the railcar being shopped, which will reduce the amount of repairs found later in the process.

“It better streamlines the shop’s ability to coordinate work flow,” said Director of Engineering Drew White.

Customers will benefit by receiving more advanced notice of necessary repairs, more thorough invoices to allow them to track trends in railcar condition, and much quicker timelines for railcar repairs, White noted.

GBW invested in the facility upgrades in order to make the improvements to Customer service and team member safety. Approximately half was for the cleaning facility, with the other half spent to install the inspection facility and upgrade the existing mechanical shop with cranes and fall protection.

The end result is much greater efficiency for inspections and cleaning than any facility previously available, Schaffer and White agreed.

Upgrades to the railcar repair facility in Fitzgerald, Georgia, will allow for a safer work environment and better Customer Service.
Prevent credit card fraud

By Andra Bryan Stefanoni
Contributing Writer

With the arrival of winter comes an uptick in cautionary messages, primarily geared at guarding against accidents in slick conditions.

But Penny Wood, who heads up purchase and fleet cards for Watco, has a cautionary message of a different sort: She wants team members to be aware of changes made nationwide to help prevent fraud.

"Many of our team members have experienced issues with purchasing cards not working at merchants like Walmart and Home Depot," Wood said.

"These merchants have updated their credit card processing services to help protect against fraudulent activity on the cards."

According to Aite Group, a financial industry research company, almost half of the world's credit card fraud now happens in the U.S. That prompted banks to move away from magnetic stripe cards, which are easier to counterfeit, and equip cards with a tiny computer chip.

In turn, that prompted merchants to install a new processing device to help prevent fraud.

"As the final piece to the puzzle, each team member who uses a card will need to know the personal identification number assigned to the card in order to complete a transaction," Wood said. "That PIN would have been created by each cardholder when activating cards."

Wood advised those who don't remember their PIN to email purchasecard@watcocompanies.com for the reset instructions. She also cautioned Watco team members to guard against fraud on purchase cards by carefully reviewing all charges weekly during the review period.

"When you have a question on any charge the first call should be to the merchant where the transaction is completed," she said.

Team members should then allow the purchase card team to help with any additional issues or problems with the card charges.

"We would request that you don't complete the dispute form on the Wells Fargo site, but allow us instead to help gather all of the appropriate information to help with the resolution of the charge in question," Wood advised.

Team members can get additional information on each card's charges by clicking on any vendor name that is in red in the Wells Fargo review.

Watco spreads holiday cheer

Continued from page 3 - and want to do those sorts of things with them, like the parade and decorating the depot for Christmas." The parade actually ran right next to the Canton depot, so participants in the parade were able to see the Christmas lights that team members took the time to put up.

"The parade gave all the team members a reason to get together to do something as a team beyond just working on the railroad, which was great," said Edwards.

Parham said that the parade gave the team members a chance to engage with the community and be more active with the Customers in Canton. He also enjoyed the time spent with team members. "The people I work with here are, without a doubt, some of the best people that I have ever worked with. I couldn't ask for a better group of individuals."

"It was an awesome way to spread some Christmas cheer, and I am so proud of our TSIC members for their role in this event," concluded Farris.

WSOR Engineer decks the halls

A little extra Holiday spirit was making its way down the railroad this past Christmas season, as Dylan Guthrie, Wisconsin & Southern Railroad (WSOR) Engineer, decorated his locomotive with lights, a wreath, and Santa Claus. Guthrie has been decorating for Christmas nine out of the ten years he has been with the WSOR, and it has been a big hit. This year, as he drove along next to the road, four different police officers turned on their lights to show appreciation for Guthrie’s work, and the picture had over 500 likes on various Facebook pages.

Way to go Dylan for going the extra mile to celebrate the season!

UTAH TEAM CELEBRATES SAFETY ANNIVERSARY

by Molly Henneke
Contributing Writer

The Wellington, Utah, Terminal Team recently celebrated their two-year safety milestone with a steak cookout.

The cookout was held on-site on November 11, 2015. Management did the cooking and dishes included rib-eyed steaks, baked beans, potato salad, and a variety of sodas to drink.

Team work plays an important role in Wellington’s success.

Mark Rice, terminal manager, said, “They take the ‘brothers keepers’ concept to heart, by building a culture of safety where each team member watches out for each other and each member is proud to be a part of the team. In addition, each team member contributes ideas that help keep the facility safe. For example, the team met and contributed their ideas into the SOP’s (safety operation practices) that they use daily at the facility.”

The Wellington facility is Watco’s first black wax oil load-out facility. This adds an additional challenge because the commodity is shipped in steam coiled tank cars and has to be steamed prior to loading and unloading to ensure the crude is the correct consistency. The oil is used for such things as specialty lubrication products.

The Wellington team met Customers needs such as increased loading, designing rail switch lead and second load track, switching operations, and overseeing the construction of the loading rack as well as providing quality and assurance services.

“Since the team has met all challenges given to them and has done it safely and efficiently,” said Rice.
**Winter Safety Practices**

Wintertime brings an increased risk for slips, trips, and falls due to slippery sidewalks, parking lots and work areas. No matter how diligent we are in the clearing and removal of snow and ice from parking lots, roadways, and sidewalks, we will likely still encounter slippery surfaces in the various work environments we operate in, both on and off our property.

It’s important to be aware of the increased potential for slips, trips and falls, and in addition to the Watco Safety Rules for specific operations, it’s important we understand and follow the basic safe practice measures outlined below to help make this winter a safe one for all of us.

- Wear appropriate footwear for your work activities, including anti-slip boot accessories when required.
- When entering buildings, remove snow and water from footwear to prevent creating wet, slippery conditions indoors.
- Use walkways that have been salted or shoveled. Don’t take shortcuts over snow piles and in areas where snow and ice removal is not feasible.
- Look ahead and test the travel path for slickness by sliding your shoe/boot on it before proceeding.
- Take short steps to maintain your center of balance over your feet.
- Walk slowly; never run on snow or ice covered surfaces.
- When entering and/or exiting vehicles, use the vehicle for support. Never jump from vehicles or equipment.
- Keep both hands free for balance, rather than in your pockets.
- Plan ahead; give yourself sufficient time and plan your route.
- Walking areas completely covered with ice may require travel along its grassy edge for traction. When in doubt, take the safe course.
- Be prepared for conditions to change—what may be wet now, may be ice as temperatures change, even slightly. Be especially aware moving into night time, and in the morning when some areas may have melted, and others are still frozen.
California Representative visits the Pacific Sun Railroad

by Michaela Kinyon
Contributing Writer

On December 22nd, Representative Scott Peters of California’s 52nd congressional district visited the Pacific Sun Railroad (PSRR) to understand more about the short line railroad industry and the transportation network in his district. Peters was greeted by a number of local Customers who ship their products on the PSRR, as well as the North County Transit District, PSRR officials, and Ashley Bosch, representative from the American Short Line Railroad Association.

After hearing from the PSRR Customers about how the PSRR serves their businesses and operates in conjunction with various other rail line services in Southern California, Peters boarded the PSRR’s first locomotive to be PTC equipped for a tour of the PSRR’s infrastructure. During the out and back trip, Peters learned about the PTC implementation process, the $45,000 short line railroad tax credit, and the tremendous value that PSRR’s Customers provide to the economy in Southern California.

"Having Congressman Peters out to the PSRR to learn more about the rail served assets in his district was very valuable for everyone involved," said Jeff Van Schaick, AVP Government Affairs for Watco. "We are also thankful that a handful of Customers made the trip out to support the PSRR and meet the Congressman."

To learn more about Rep. Peters, please visit his official website at: [https://scottpeters@mail.house.gov](https://scottpeters@mail.house.gov).

the Dispatch

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Watco's Philadelphia Terminal Team celebrates two years injury-free

by Molly Henneke
Contributing Writer

The Watco Philadelphia Terminal Team recently reached two-years injury-free while operating at the Philadelphia Energy Solutions Refinery. The team celebrated this great achievement at the October Safety meeting in a hall at the refinery with a catered luncheon. The event was attended by several refinery supervisors and lead personnel in refinery management. All enjoyed some great barbecue ribs, brisket, and chicken with all the fixings.

Terminal Manager Joe Ryder spoke to the team and applauded their hard work and determination. In addition, each team member was given a backpack, complete with the Philadelphia Terminal insignia.

Part of the team’s success is contributed to each team member knowing and following the safety rules while operating in the North Rail Yard, which switches crude by rail 24/7 with two operating manifolds capable of off-loading 120 tank cars each. The same focus to safety and detail holds true in switching the South Rail Yard, which operates around the clock as well, switching 19 tracks of cars for the plant.

This past summer, Team Philadelphia participated in the Summer Spike Safety Program. This program included a bit of “safety competition” between crews. Monthly and quarterly awards, along with bragging rights, made it fun while encouraging all to strive to perform safely each and every day. A mentoring program has been established where new team members are assigned to more “seasoned” members of the team,. This not only helps bring the “new guy” up to speed, but solidifies the “we are our brothers keeper” mindset within all team members.

Philadelphia management and team members look forward to continuing to serve our Customer in Philadelphia while maintaining the highest level of attention to detail and safety.

Ryder said, “Here in Philly, we autograph our work with excellence!”