

88' Maintenance of Way Budget Tops \$20 Million

The following assessment of the 1988 Maintenance of Way program was offered by Chief Engineer Rich Keller.

Track

Forty-five thousand ties have been installed between Big Timber and Belgrade by the tie gang. The project was completed July 27. The gang has now moved to Missoula and will install 25 miles of continuous welded rail by October. An additional 25,000 ties will be installed on smaller projects on the main line, branches and yards this season.

The tie gang started the season with 25 of the 29 people employed being inexperienced; however, they recently installed 1627 ties in one 10 hour day which is quite an achievement. The gang worked mostly four day/10 hour shifts Sunday through Wednesday to better accommodate the train schedules and allowing more track time for installing ties.

Two surfacing gangs consisting of a foreman, tamper operator and ballast regulator operator are working this season. Gang #1952 in the Billings to Helena territory has been following the tie gang. Gang #1951 is working in the Missoula area and will follow the steel gang work.

Each surfacing gang has a high-production, state-of-the-art Jackson 6700 switch tamper equipped with a curve computer. The machine assigned to Gang #1951 has a laser-controlled liner buggy for straightening long tangents. Both gangs have tamped up to 10,000 feet of track in one ten-hour day. Gang #1952 recently received a Tamper



Guided by beams of light, the Jackson 6700 tamper (in distance) aligns and smooths the main line east of Big Timber on May 25, 1988. A ballast regulator follows going back and forth to redistribute ballast uniformly along the track and into the crib areas between the ties.

C-series ballast regulator with snow equipment. This is a dual purpose machine for plowing and dressing ballast during the construction season and removing snow in the winter.

In other areas, section crews, with added summer help, are using maintenance tampers and older tie installation equipment on projects such as installing 5,000 ties on the Polson Line and 3,000 on the Darby Branch. Scheduled work on the Harrison Line will include removing elevation on some curves and installing ties and ballast as a measure to upgrade the line to handle jumbo covered hoppers. The Alder Branch work will include replacing one mile of small rail.

Lombard, Montana, has been selected as a site for the installation of an 8900' siding with No. 16 turnouts. The project will involve constructing a new bridge spanning Sixteen Mile Creek. Permitting has been completed (continued, see M-O-W, page 3)

THINK SAFETY FIRST!

Lost time due to reportable injuries in the railroad industry in general averages about 10-12 days for each incident.

In spite of start-up adversities, Montana Rail Link employees were doing far better than that; however, the statistics shown below reveal that MRL employees are steadily suffering injuries of growing number and severity – now approaching the national average.

The year began with three reportable injuries and five lost days in January for a frequency/severity ratio of 0.16 and 1.5 days lost for each. This has climbed to seven reportable injuries in June with 32 days lost for a frequency/severity ratio of 2.07 and 4.5 days lost for each reportable.

July figures are not yet available (continued, see SAFETY, page 2)

New Dispatching Center Opens

The new train dispatching center at Missoula became operational on July 5 when the territory between Laurel and Helena was transferred from Billings. Helen Tauscher and Tom Reffitt pushed buttons on the console for the first line up for a train movement. The transfer of the Helena - Sandpoint territory followed on July 7.

Since MRL start-up October 31, 1987, train dispatching has been accomplished under contract by Burlington Northern personnel at Billings while the new Missoula center was being planned and constructed. The \$800,000 dispatching center incorporates the latest in technology, featuring a computer-

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aided automatic train dispatching system built by General Railway Signal that features CRT's (cathode ray tubes) to monitor and control all traffic. The center is in operation 24 hours a day, 7 days per week, and is staffed by a minimum of three persons per shift (a manager for each of the two dispatching territories and a supervisor). MRL's train dispatchers have the title of manager train movement. Eighteen people are employed at the center including Manager Control Systems Rocky Scalice, who is responsible for the maintenance of all equipment needed to run the operation.

Gary Widle, vice president of operations, is pleased with the new facility. He stated: "This dispatching center gives us closer control of crew management and improves the performance of the train operation. This translates to greater customer satisfaction and many efficiencies associated with close management." Jon Gjersing,



Terry Toppins, right, was the last BN dispatcher at Missoula and the first MRL employee to serve at the new train dispatching center. Also pictured is Manager Train Control Rollie Johnson. Below, Train Control Managers Helen Tauscher and Tom Reffitt made the first train line up in the dispatching center on July 5. Director Train Control Jon Gjersing is at right. Double coverage of each position was necessary at start-up until all employees became familiar with the new equipment.



director train movement, is also pleased with the new center's functional surroundings and the quality of the personnel selected to fill the positions. There is also improved flexibility with the staff assignments because all of the managers will be familiar with all territories and positions.

The Burlington Northern Railroad discontinued train dispatching in Missoula with the closing of the offices on April 14, 1984. At that time, all dispatching for the area now operated by MRL and associated personnel were relocated to Billings. Mr. Terry Toppins, then employed by the BN, was the last dispatcher to serve at the old office. Toppins, now employed by MRL, became the first employee to serve in the new Missoula facility as the assistant director train movement on July 1, 1988.

SAFETY (from page 1)

but indications are that they will be worse than June!

All of us need to carefully assess our approach to safety!

Folklore tells us that if you draw a circle with chalk on a barn floor, then swing a hen around in the air and set her down in the circle, she won't be able to cross the line. She will become a prisoner inside the chalked circle.

This may or may not be true; but, it is true that a lot of people draw their own tight little circles and then become prisoners within them. They fence themselves in with habits, beliefs, even superstitions, but mostly their own ideas. Sometimes, these are good ideas. Even so, people may be closing their eyes and minds to better ideas.

Suppose you have been doing a certain job the same way for years and have never been injured or had a close call. You can't help but believe then that you have always been doing the job the right way.

When unsafe acts are repeated again and again, it's just a matter of time until the inevitable happens.

Are you sure you are taking the time to do the job safely?

THINK ABOUT IT!

Developed by the National Transportation Safety Board, this method of developing statistics is used in all industries:

Frequency: Number of Incidents multiplied by 200,000 divided by total hours worked.

Severity: Number of lost days multiplied by 200,000 divided by total hours worked.

Frequency/Severity Ratio: Frequency times severity divided by 200.

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A Tamper Corp. TR10 tie inserter/remover is pictured here positioning new cross ties near Big Timber on May 25, 1988.

A Blow Against MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY!

Sunday afternoon, July 11, Missoula area MRL employees, families and friends exhibited plenty of team work and spirit when they participated in Strike Force—a bowling event to raise money for MDA (neuromuscular muscle disease) research. The keggers raised funds by obtaining pledges for each pin knocked down during a three-game series.

A special thanks to the following participants: Ollie Munier, Carol Slaght, Jeanne Franz, Debby Hofmeir, Jeanette Thies, Debbie Parkinson, Mollie Browne, Aleta Plummer, Julie McLeod, Colette Crist, Laurie Conley, Denise Loberg, Sharon, Carl and Lisette Prinzing, Gary Widle, Jean and Mel Dinius. Their combined efforts raised nearly \$600.

Keeping Track Montana Rail Link Personnel Changes

Effective June 1, 1988:

Dana M. Beck appointed Manager Local Billing and Interline Settlements with responsibility for all local billing and interline received settlements of freight handled over Sandpoint, ID, filling the position previously held by Laurie S. Wilson, who has joined the Washington Corporation's computer department. Miss Beck served previously as a clerk in the general offices.

Dale J. "Chip" Raber appointed Mechanical Foreman with headquarters in Missoula. Raber served previously as a mechanical foreman in Laurel.

M-O-W (continued from page 1) and construction is expected to begin about August 1st.

The 1988 weed spraying program has been completed. The majority of the cross ties needed for 1988 work have been received and we are in the process of setting up tie requirements for the 1989 season.

B&B Department

The west crew, working between Garrison and Sandpoint, replaced ties on Bridge 57 at Trout Creek, completed steel bearing repairs to Bridge 165 near Fish Creek and upgraded a bridge spanning the Clark Fork River at Phosphate to accommodate servicing the Cominco phosphate loading facility. Steel repair work is now in progress on bridge 207 near Quinns.

The east crew has completed the Helena depot rehabilitation project which included restoring the original appearance of the building, partitions for new offices, painting, new floors, and renewing fascia boards. In addition, air conditioning is being installed and the outside of the building was cleaned. During first four months of the year, part of the crew worked at Livingston getting the shops ready for the run-through locomotive servicing and LRC.

Signal & Communications

The signal department has installed dragging equipment detectors on all 15 hot box detectors and is also installing two additional hot box detectors at Livingston and Paradise.

The new computer-aided dispatching center in Missoula has been placed in operation (see article on page 2). Five more control points are in the process of being installed in the ABS (automatic block signal) territory on sidings between Frenchtown and Paradise. They are at the west end of Toole, Superior, Rivulet, and Quinns and the east end of Paradise. These are power switches operated by the dispatcher at Missoula.

A permanent signal crew was hired in early Spring to do some of the work mentioned above as well as other



A 1988 Ford F-260 Supercab pickup truck with 4-wheel drive and hyrail assigned to Helena roadmaster Pete Christensen (in cab) typifies the new vehicles acquired this year.

projects scheduled, including upgrading some of the present semaphore type signals to color light.

Equipment Acquisitions

Track equipment acquired this year includes two new Jackson Jordan 6700 tampers, two Tamper Corp. TR10 tie inserter/removers, one new and two used Portec Zapper spikers, one Tamper Corp. ballast regulator with snow plow, and one used Kershaw ballast regulator. Smaller equipment purchases were made for such items as switch point grinders, rail drills, weld shears, spike pullers, trailers and other new and used equipment totalling over \$1 million.

Included in the 1988 rubber-tired vehicle replacement program, 19 units in all, are three new hyrail trucks for the welders and five 4-wheel drive hyrail vehicles for roadmasters and assistant roadmasters. All vehicles not being replaced have been painted in the MRL livery of white and blue.

As stated in an earlier newsletter, MRL has an aggressive engineering department program with a budget totalling over \$20 million divided between operating and capital improvements. Says Rich Keller: "We intend to continue to make the improvements that make sense and enhance our efficiency in the operation of the railroad." All employees have a stake in this through the profit sharing program. Mr. Keller continued: "It can't be done unless we work together to do it and we can be proud of what we've done so far."



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FIRST CLASS

MRL Women's Auxiliary Organized

The MRL Women's Auxiliary has been organized and seeks support of all wives of employees and women employees. The organization has been active in civic affairs in the Missoula area. Voter registration was held at the Missoula yard office May 2, 3 & 4, which proved to be a real convenience for the many new residents of the Missoula area. Debbie Parkinson, Debby Hofmeier, Jeanne Franz, Denny Thies, Mollie Browne and Cindy Gibson staffed the desk over the three-day period. On June 6 and 8, the Helena and Missoula chapters called for donations for the March of Dimes and raised over \$2,400. Other projects planned are: a Red Cross blood drive in August (plans are being finalized) and a cook book which will be sold with the proceeds going to a local charity. Favorite recipe contributions should be forwarded to Mollie Browne at 137 Cohosset Drive, or Cindy Gibson at 2513 Arcadia in Missoula as soon as possible.

If you're interested in getting involved with this organization or assisting with future projects, please contact Jeanne Franz, 721-8706 or Debbie Parkinson, 549-5860. Meetings are held monthly on the third Wednesday.



MRL Women's Auxiliary members Debbie Parkinson, left, and Debby Hofmeier, wives of Missoula engineers John Parkinson and Richard Hofmeier, were part of the crew that staffed the voter registration desk at Missoula yard office in May.

WORK SAFELY TODAY!

Golf Digest

Beneath a beautiful Montana summer sky, 90 MRL employees, customers, friends and suppliers participated in the 1st annual MRL Golf Tournament at the Hamilton Golf Club on Saturday, June 18.

The tournament began with a bang when Gary Widle, vice president of operations, stepped to the tee and hit the ceremonial first ball. The ball exploded upon impact!

It is rumored the Widle's shot may have been one of the better drives on the course that day, as the field was peppered with entrants whose handicaps were exceeded only by the temperature on the thermometer.

Skill level and sunburns notwithstanding, the outing was a great success. A team scramble format was used, with 18 five-person teams competing for a variety of prizes donated by various firms and suppliers.

First place and a \$50 gift certificate went to team #2 - Tom Stewart, Jim Secretarski, Deb Browning, Rick Zimmer and Gary Newlon. In second place and winning a \$40 gift certificate was team #17 - Greg Rutherford, Jack Howard, Ralph Mackey, Richard Walton and Bob Thompson. A \$20 gift certificate was awarded to Gary Funston, Derek Nelson, Mike O'Shaunessy, Lynda Frost and Larry Beal, as team #4 wedged its way into third place.

Prizes were also given to the fourth, fifth and sixth place teams, and many other players received a variety of door prizes, including a trip for two to Seattle and a portable television set.

A golf outing at the Briar Wood Country Club in Billings was held May 31 with seven four-man teams participating using the scramble format. First place was taken by the team of Tom Lemm, Mark Lemm, Bob Cook and Dirk Cloninger. Gary Funston, Arnie Eissler, Garland Slider and John Garreffa came in second with an 8 under par performance. Gary Funston's HOLE IN ONE using an 8 iron on the #3 hole (147 yards) was the highlight of the event. Gary's only comment, "WOW!"