

Another First for MRL

by Claude Van Winkle

November 2, 2004 was an historic day for Montana Rail Link with the signing of an Agreement with EMD for the purchase of 16 new locomotives. The 4300 horsepower SD 70Ace locomotives were recently seen in "test" operation in the Helena and Livingston areas. This testing was designed to help analyze the equipment's fuel efficiency and improved adhesion benefits to handle coal and grain trains over our mountain grades. The test results confirmed our initial estimates with greater than 20% fuel savings and the ability of five new locomotives replacing eight older locomotives on coal and grain trains at Helena, and three new locomotives replacing five older locomotives at Livingston.

Following extensive testing, the wheels were set in motion to order the new locomotives that are scheduled to arrive on MRL in mid-summer 2005. The new units will be equipped with IntelliTrains, a system similar to GM's Onstar on personal vehicles, allowing remote access to the locomotives' computers while in route, which will increase utilization and availability. This feature will also provide indication of locomotive defects prior to failure, troubleshooting assistance, fuel levels, and other maintenance information prior to its arrival at the next service track.

MRL President, Tom Walsh said, *Acquiring new state-of-the-art locomotives is one of many examples of Montana Rail Link's long term commitment to our employees and to the customers we serve. Not only are the new units highly energy efficient, they are the newest in low emission technology. I am thrilled to be part of a company that is quickly becoming a technological leader in its field.*



The five SD70Ace locomotives that were tested on MRL territory

Operation Life Saver

by Pete Lawrenson

The contributions made by Montana Rail Link to Montana Operation Lifesaver have been substantial since Operation Lifesaver startup in 1988. In association with the UP 4449 Steam Engine Excursion in October, Laurel-Billings, Operation Life Saver presenters Eddie Dix and Jon Klasna made presentations to over 600 Billings area elementary children. In addition, Missoula area Operation Lifesaver presenters Lori Foust and Bill Scanlan, along with volunteer Don Matlock, presented the OL message and a tour of the steam engine in Sandpoint to 706 children and 75 adults.



Bill Scanlan and Lori Foust

The impact of Operation Lifesaver is difficult to measure, but we do know the commitment and energy by the volunteer presenters does save lives! Thank you to all those involved.

Chrome Project

by Mark Smith

The final load of chrome ore moved from Columbus to Duluth, Minnesota, in July 2004. The project began in April 2004 and moved a total of 1,520 cars equating to 152,000 tons. An overview of cars moved is as follows:

April ~ 240 • May ~ 422 • June ~ 481 • July ~ 377

The project was exceptionally successful with no injuries or interruptions of service experienced during the four months. Many thanks to all the MRL employees and the contractor (Transystems) who put this together to make it a great success!

Undercutting 2004

by Randy Gustin

A major track improvement project to undercut the track between Helena and Blossburg was completed on September 17 following two months of intensive work. Undercutting removes the ballast surrounding the ties to a depth of approximately ten inches below the tie.



Undercutter working between Tobin and Blossburg

The ballast is screened to remove dirt, sand, and degraded material and then returned to the track. This improves drainage, helps ties last longer, and improves the ability of the track to withstand stresses caused by heat, traffic, and other forces. It also improves the ability of the track to hold proper surface and alignment, which results in a better ride and less stress on the rail.

The amount of ballast required to replace the rejected material, in addition to the large track windows needed to make efficient use of the equipment, were provided with the cooperation of the operating and mechanical departments, without whose assistance a project of this magnitude would not be possible. Even with having to overcome some early mechanical issues with the contract machine, MRL employees were successful in completing this work under budget, and more importantly, with no accountable or reportable injuries.



Promotions

Dale Smith ~ now **Temporary Signal and Communication Supervisor**
from Signal Foreman effective September 8, 2004

Look Who's New

Brynn Bequette ~ accounts payable
Lora Covert ~ clerk
Daryk Hall ~ clerk

Retirements

Neal D. Cowan
Locomotive Engineer, Laurel

Neal began his career with the Milwaukee Railroad in 1967. When the Milwaukee folded, he then went to work for Montana Western, and has been with Montana Rail Link since startup. Neal retired on September 15, 2004.

Manuel H. "Manny" Enriquez
Locomotive Engineer, Laurel

Manny began his career with the Denver and Rio Grande Western (D&RGW) in 1971 as a coach cleaner and then as an engine watchman. In 1980 he entered the operating department in Pueblo, Colorado as a locomotive engineer trainee. Upon his promotion he continued his career with the D&RGW and MRL. Manny retired on October 31, 2004.

Richard W. "Skip" Johnson
Electrician, Laurel

After 39 years of railroading, Skip will officially retire on November 30, 2004. Skip began his railroad career with the Northern Pacific in May of 1965 as an electrician apprentice in Glendive, and later as an electrician at the Laurel Roundhouse.

Larry W. Kulaski
Section Foreman, Drummond

Larry began working for the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1963 as a section laborer. In 1965 he left to serve four years in the military, returning to the NP in 1969. When BN took over, Larry continued to work at the Drummond Section and then for MRL at startup. Retired October 11, 2004.

Marvin McKeever
Grinder, Missoula

Marvin began his railroad career in 1970 with the BN. At MRL startup he worked as a section laborer in Frenchtown until he switched to grinder in Missoula in 1999. Marvin's favorite position was ballast regulator. Retired September 10, 2004.

Back on track . . . from the Operating Department

by Mark Smith

The Operating Department continued to experience some problems with the stacking feature on the remote switches in October, however, the program has since returned to operation and now back in business.

Cars switched at Laurel were approximately 3,000 cars over the budgeted 15,800 for the month of October. With the increase in traffic, MRL is performing the 1,000 mile inspection on many grain empties and loads at Livingston in order to relieve some of the congestion at Laurel. The Mechanical Department is to be commended, especially Jack Gabrian, for the time and effort they have devoted to make this plan come together without a hitch.

With the increase in traffic and future expectations remaining the same, MRL is looking for new switchmen, and will be recruiting applicants for a switchmen's training class in January.

Supervisor ~ F.I.R.S.T

by Ted Hagemo

Beginning in mid-November MRL managers will attend a new training program entitled Supervisor FIRST. This training was developed to provide managers additional tools for use in their day-to-day activities, and to focus on supervisory leadership skills. Classes will consist of 12 hours over a two-day period and will be an open discussion and sharing of experiences and ideas in several different categories.

We are all familiar with our Mission Statement: *We will provide transportation services resulting in long-term growth and prosperity for our company, customers and employees.* How we accomplish our Mission and the manner in which we conduct ourselves while representing MRL is defined in our Value Statement:

F.I.R.S.T (Fairness • Integrity • Respect • Safety • Trust).

Training will focus on in-depth discussions of the MRL Value Statement and will include various topics such as legal considerations, decision-making, communication, feedback, work organization, delegation, motivation, attitude, coaching, emotional intelligence and other topics.

This training program has been developed over the past two years using numerous resources. Trainers will be Mike Lemm, Pete Lawrenson, Pam Schneider, and Ted Hagemo.

CHUGGIN' DOWN MEMORY LANE

by Lynda Frost

MRL employees walked away with the float trophy for "Best Theme" in the 2004 University of Montana Homecoming parade in October. More than twenty employees and family members were donned in 1940's attire as they were ushered down the street on the MRL Iron Horse of Yesterday, the rubber-tired locomotive built



The MRL award winning parade entry

by our own Livingston Mechanical Department. The high-spirited group cheered and sang along to *Chattanooga Choo Choo*, in this year's parade. MRL has an entry in the UM Homecoming parade every other year.

Employee Referrals

by Pam Schneider

MRL employees are a vital component of our efforts to recruit and hire the best people. Applicants recommended by employees tend to be highly qualified because employees do not make referrals lightly. They know the candidate they recommend could soon become their co-worker. They give their friends and associates an insider's view on the company culture so candidates come to the interview with their eyes wide open.

In addition to the specific requirements listed on the job posting, here are some of the personal characteristics we seek in prospective new hires.

- Good attitude
- Safety conscious
- Communication skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Team player
- Motivated/Goal oriented
- Adaptable

Employees have other opportunities to influence the hiring process. If an applicant lists them as a personal reference, they can provide human resources with relevant information that will assist the selection team in hiring the best candidate. Additionally, employees can encourage interested friends and associates to monitor our website to view current openings and download an application.

The Human Resource Department views employees as invaluable recruitment partners. We encourage all MRL employees to view themselves as recruiters who have the ability to further our company's success by referring highly qualified, talented people.

Dispatch is the new employee "communique" that replaces the MRL newsletter.

You can access the Dispatch on the internet at www.montanarail.com

Dates to Remember:

November 25	Holiday
November 26	Holiday
December 03	Laurel Christmas Party
December 04	Livingston Christmas Party
	SouthGate Mall Santa Train
December 11	Helena Christmas Party
December 18	Missoula Christmas Party
December 24	Holiday
December 25	Holiday
December 31	Holiday
January 01	Holiday

Happy Holidays!

