

## SAFETY FIRST

BY MIKE LEMM



Mike Lemm

Last month the department heads, Pete Lawrenson, Ted Hagemo and I, completed a 'Safety First' campaign across the railroad. The meetings focused on safety, attitude, FIRST (Fairness · Integrity · Respect · Safety · Trust) and the 2005 business forecast. Overall, the meetings were well received and the majority of the meetings provided positive feedback. The one thing I noticed more than anything is that our employees want to know

what is happening within the Company, and they are truly concerned about the Company's future. Many good questions and concerns were discussed during the meetings and we answered as many as possible. Is the company going to be able to address all the issues? Probably not. But if we take the time to use our value system to help explain the reasoning behind decisions rather than letting people make assumptions, we will go far in creating a positive work environment. This communication is key in creating and maintaining a safe and productive railroad. *Employees and supervisors with good positive attitudes create a safe and positive workplace.*

We also shared the video, *Do Right II*, by Lou Holtz, which focuses on our value statement as well as teamwork. In the video, Holtz stresses three things that help make a successful company ~ Do what's right ~ Strive for excellence ~ Treat people like you would like to be treated. By practicing these values, I have no doubt that Montana Rail Link will continue to be a successful railroad for many years in the future. We know it won't always be easy, but with a lot of hard work, it can be attained.

## FROM THE OPERATING FRONT

by Mark Smith

The new switchman trainees are currently in the field for the program's on-the-job training. The class began in late January with a total of 30 new hires; three have dropped leaving the existing class at 27. There are 13 new hires in the Laurel/Billings area and 14 on the west end of the railroad (Missoula/Helena). They are scheduled to complete their final exams in the Laurel/Billings area on the 24th and 25th of March and in Missoula on the 17th and 18th, leaving them available for mark-up near the end of March. There are 18 engineer trainees in the program that should be ready to mark-up in the next few months. With the new switchmen and the engineer trainees, manpower concerns should be back on track.

Interviews have begun for two Assistant Trainmaster positions in Laurel with plans to begin training in early March.

A special thanks to the B of LET facilitators who helped with the new switchman trainees: Laurel/Billings - Jenny Slater, Tom Salazar, Dave Roth and Richard Dawes, Missoula - Allan Tims and Doug Grissom.

## HAROLD F. HAMMOND SAFETY AWARD



Richard Dawes

Montana Rail Link is proud to announce Richard Dawes, a Laurel locomotive engineer, as its 2004 nominee for the Association of American Railroads' Harold F. Hammond Award and the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association's Safety person of the Year. This nomination recognizes an individual railroad employee who has demonstrated outstanding safety achievement during the award year, with special emphasis on initiatives that improve employee safety in the work place.

Among his many deeds, Richard has participated in MRL safety audits, general safety committees, remote control safety committees, hazmat drills, and Operation Lifesaver. He has also been active in mentoring new switchmen and assisting in writing new material for their training program. In addition to his many MRL activities, Richard is very active in his community through the Habitat for Humanities, Laurel Soccer, the Yellowstone Valley YMCA, and the Troy Stutterheim Memorial. Richard is an exemplary employee who has been instrumental in setting a very high standard in both safety and service.

MRL nominees have competed exceptionally well in this national safety awards program. Laurel locomotive Engineer DK Roth was named ASLRRRA Safety person of the Year in 2001 and 2004; and Laurel carman Dennis Greenwalt was recognized as both the AAR Hammond Award winner and ASLRRRA Safety person of the year in 2003.

## Engineering Passes 100 Day Milestone

by Randy Gustin

On February 16th, the Engineering Department employees completed 100 days injury-free. This significant milestone shows a commitment to safety in 2005 and beyond. In addition, the pattern closely mirrors that of 1996, when the department made a run of over 300 days without a reportable injury. The recent performance as well as the previous streak is a clear demonstration that it is possible to work without injuries, in spite of difficult weather conditions and busy work schedules.

Congratulations and thanks to the employees in the Engineering Department for their safe work.





## Keeping Track

### Promotions

**Dan Johnson** - now **Manager of Control Systems**, Missoula from Signal Department effective January 14, 2005

**Jeremie Wilson** - now **Trainmaster**, Laurel from Assistant Trainmaster effective January 24, 2005

### Look Who's New

#### Carman Apprentice:

Brandon Durryea

#### Extra Board Clerk:

Charlie Baker  
Susan Blythe  
Roberta Kline

#### Machinist Apprentice:

Frank Smith

#### Switchman Trainees:

Dave Babbitt	Dustin Lawson
Bret Baldassin	Adam Leishman
Jay Bauer	Dusty Mallo
Tom Blixt	Kris Marshall
Chad Couture	Thad McGibben
Kody Crittendon	Chet McLean
Josh Duff	Jeremy Moore
Mike Firehammer	Jason Morris
Mick Goff	Scott Remmick
Gary Gordon	Kevin Roberts
Tod Hardy	James Roberts
Eric Hastings	Travis Stabnau
Gabriel Hill	Scott Struna
Jeremy Langendorff	

## Service Award Program

In 1996, Washington Corporations established the Service Award Program in appreciation for the loyalty and dedication from its employees. The program provides recognition at distinct levels, and includes brass, copper, silver and gold lapel pins.

This year Montana Rail Link presented service awards to its employees.

One year pin ~ 49  
Five year pin ~ 6  
Ten year pin ~ 30  
Fifteen year pin ~ 51  
Twenty year pin ~ 1\*

\* Service includes past employment within all Washington companies



Service Award presentation at the General Office Building. Left to right - Mary Semmens, Brent Mueller, Trish Anderson, Anne Marvin, Lynda Frost, Bev Racher, Wanda Russell, Debbie Marshall, Angie Binns, Kendra Johnson, Lucique Duhamel, Kayleen Woodruff, Kiri Griffin, and Lori Faust.

## Bringing Back the Past by Jack Gabbian



Unloading wheel machine at Livingston Running Repair

Very soon the Mechanical forces in Livingston will be back doing what they did 20 years ago. In January a wheel truing machine was set in a new building with the help of the B&B Department and wrecking crane. The machine was purchased from American Wheel Truing and is very similar to the original machine.

The site for the machine was selected to coincide with the original location where a similar machine was in operation during the BN days. The pit had been filled in and not used since its removal in the early 1980's.

After some modifications, the operation should be up and running soon. The addition of this machine will save countless hours that were spent on wheel changes in the past.

## In Appreciation

by Pete Lawrenson

Each February and March, Montana Rail Link sponsors an appreciation dinner for the numerous company employees who volunteer countless hours in providing Operation Lifesaver presentations to virtually any audience. MRL has approximately 35 active Operation Lifesaver volunteers conducting an average of 100 presentations per year.

It is difficult to measure the success of Operation Lifesaver because there is no tool to determine how many incidents were prevented by what people learned during a presentation. But, by observing the steady decline of grade crossing collisions on MRL territory and nationwide on all railroads, Operation Lifesaver is recognized as a tremendous success in preventing railroad grade crossing collisions, injuries and fatalities. A hearty THANKS to all those dedicated Montana Rail Link employees making Operation Lifesaver a successful program and for caring enough to make a difference!

Any MRL employee interested in becoming an Operation Lifesaver presenter can contact Pete Lawrenson at 523-1575 to learn more about this program and the presenter requirements.

## It's Survey Time . . .

by Lynda Frost

Your MRL Employee Survey team will be canvassing the territory throughout the first two weeks of April. The five-person team will consist of:

Lynda Frost  
Van Blakely ~ Purchasing  
Mike McKay ~ Marketing  
Jean Lober ~ G/A  
Pete Lawrenson ~ Security

The Employee Survey Team will be meeting with employees around the clock to complete the surveys.

MRL surveys its employees every 2-3 years on topics such as Accountability, Commitment, Communication, Quality, Respect, Safety and Simplicity. The questionnaire was designed to obtain feedback from our employees with regard to work experiences at MRL. The results enable us to identify what we do well and also helps identify any areas that may need improvement. Like the last survey, these results will be published in an upcoming *Dispatch*.

Last year the survey was completed by more than 600 employees - it is the goal of this year's team to increase that number to help provide even more accurate feedback from our people. Keep an eye out for your survey team - they're looking forward to seeing you!

## Dates to Remember

Employee Survey  
April 4 - 11

General Staff Meeting  
April 14  
Helena

Safe Days BBQ's  
April 25 ~ 29  
All Locations

Watson's Childrens Shelter  
Bike for Shelter  
Missoula Fundraiser  
May 7

### THE WASHINGTON COMPANIES



The \$500 increase in Washington Companies' Employee Grant-

in-Aid Program resulted in financial assistance to 13 additional families. Last year MRL had 37 students participating in this program and this year there are 50, an increase from \$9,250 to \$25,000. If anyone has questions about qualifications, call Lynda Frost at 523-1417.