



VIEWS & NEWS

A Publication of the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association

Happy Veterans Day!

In recognition of Veterans Day on Nov. 11, ASLRRRA thanks every service member, past and present, for the sacrifices they have made in service to our country.

In This Issue:

- **Welcome to Our Newest Member** – We are happy to welcome new supplier member Class 1 Professionals. Learn more about what they do in our [ASLRRRA New Members section](#) below.

Headlines

In Business, as Team Members and in the Community, ASLRRRA Members Work in Many Ways to Support the U.S. Military and Veterans



For ASLRRRA members, engagement with the U.S. Armed Forces is not limited to one specific type of outreach or interaction. The ways short line railroads and supplier companies work with and support military members and veterans span a wide variety of projects and reach individuals at all stages of their military career.

While many may be familiar with the idea of raising money for veterans' organizations or causes, not everyone is aware of the extent to which railroads still work with the military. One way short lines do so is by assisting with



Top photo: Brigadier General Stephen Osborn speaks with representatives of Iowa Northern Railway regarding the movement of Iowa National Guard equipment via rail.

Middle: Proceeds from sales of Watco's annual Independence Day t-shirt are donated to a military organization. Organizations that have benefitted include Honor Flight, Military Missions in Action, and the USO.

Bottom: Military-veteran employees of ASLRRR member PowerRail presented a check for \$2,100, raised through an employee-organized raffle and matching company contribution, to Veterans Promise.



training exercises and providing facilities, equipment and guidance for units to practice large-scale movements of supplies by rail.

In September, ASLRRR member Iowa Northern Railway Company executed such a movement with the Iowa National Guard, loading flatbed railcars with military vehicles and other equipment for a daytime move originating at one of Iowa Northern's facilities.

When it comes to working with active-duty reservists and veterans, ASLRRR members often take proactive steps to recruit, hire and retain individuals with a military background, as their knowledge, skills, experiences and values often align with those necessary to be successful in the short line industry.

ASLRRR member parent company Watco has a specific military outreach and hire program. Ken Killingsworth, a talent acquisition manager and U.S. Army veteran who heads up Watco's effort to support service members making the transition to civilian employment, regularly visits military installations to build relationships and connects military transition assistance personnel to Watco recruiters. And Watco is preparing to launch a landing page dedicated to transitioning military to help them find jobs with required skills that match their training and experience.

As of October 2022, veterans comprise at least 233 of over 4,700 Watco team members. Veterans now account for 9 percent of Watco's total hires from May through September, which is close to double the percentage of veterans in the overall U.S. civilian labor force.

In addition to these hiring and transition efforts, Watco sells an Independence Day t-shirt every year, donating the proceeds to a military organization. Since 2019, Watco has donated more than \$20,000 to Honor Flight, Military Missions in Action, the United Service Organizations (USO) and others.

Donating to veteran- and military-affiliated organizations rounds out the ways ASLRRR members support this group. On Oct. 27, several of Associate Business Member PowerRail's military-veteran employees visited the Pennsylvania office of Veterans Promise, bringing with them a \$2,100 check that will help the organization continue its efforts to support veterans and their families in the local community.

Half of the donation came from PowerRail employees, who raised \$1,050 through a raffle held last month during a company open house. PowerRail then made a matching contribution.

Veterans Promise raises awareness of issues affecting veterans, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), suicide and drug and alcohol abuse. The organization works to assist and advocate for veterans, helping them access important resources and offering financial aid to veterans in need.

Nominate an ASLRRR Member for the Veterans Engagement Award

The member stories told here are stories that are ideal for use as part of a company's nomination package for the ASLRRR Veterans Engagement Award.

ASLRRR is accepting nominations for this award, which honors industry employers who demonstrate positive policies toward U.S. veterans and who implement unique programs and practices to hire, recognize, support, and engage with veterans in the workplace and the broader community.

The 2023 Veterans Engagement Award winner will be recognized at ASLRRR's Annual Conference and Exhibition, April 2-4, in New Orleans, LA. Find Veterans Engagement Award nomination criteria and a nomination form [on ASLRRR's website](#). Award nominations will be due in February 2023.



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ASLRRR

Regulatory Update

Comments by ASLRRR, NRC on Proposed Rule Advocate Looking to Other Agencies for Solutions

ASLRRR and the National Railroad Construction and Maintenance Association (NRC) [submitted joint comments](#) to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) in response to a [notice of proposed rulemaking](#) (NPRM) to "solicit information to help determine whether FRA should retain or remove a provision in the Risk Reduction Program (RRP) final rule."

The provision would define contractors who perform a significant portion of a railroad's operations as directly affected employees for the purposes of RRP rule compliance. ASLRRR and the NRC call on the FRA to follow the lead of the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) and only consider contractors who act as conductors, locomotive engineers and dispatchers as directly affected employees.

The comments also call the wording of key portions of the FRA's NPRM too vague and say the definition of an affected employee exceeds the statutory language of the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008.

ASLRRRA Submits Comments on Proposed California Regulation Affecting Locomotive Operations

ASLRRRA [submitted comments](#) to the California Air Resources Board (CARB) addressing the board's [proposed in-use locomotive regulation](#). The regulation would require railroads operating in California to adhere to a timeline of requirements starting in 2024 with limitations on locomotive idling, submission of locomotive activity reports and more.

The Association's comments point out the ways its short line members already implement environmentally friendly practices and argue that CARB's proposed regulation could have severe financial effects on small railroads, potentially putting some out of business.

The comments also say that CARB has underestimated the cost burden of the rule and incorrectly assume that small railroads can simply shift the cost to its customers. Ultimately, the regulation's onerous requirements threaten to shift freight traffic from rail back on to California's highways.

Railroad Retirement Board Q&A Examines Railroad Retirement Annuities and Noncovered Service Pensions

Retired railroad employees who are entitled to noncovered service pensions could find their railroad retirement annuities subject to reductions, a situation the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) explores in the latest installment of its [Question and Answer \(Q&A\) series](#).

The Q&A explains which employees might be affected by reductions and what benefits would trigger a reduction. Employees first eligible for a railroad retirement annuity and a federal, state or local government pension after 1985 could see a reduction in the tier I portion of their annuity. The same might apply to some other payments not covered by railroad retirement or social security, such as those from a nonprofit organization, foreign government or foreign employer.

More information can be found on the RRB's [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page under the [Public Pensions category](#).

Legislative Update



ASLRRRA Team Works to Get Short Line Disaster Relief Included with Appropriations Bill

Election Day was yesterday, ushering in a lame-duck session wherein much focus will be on pushing through a main appropriations bill before the current continuing resolution expires on Dec. 16.

There is an effort on Capitol Hill to include funding for disaster relief programs, a "disaster supplemental," as a part of the longer-term spending bill. ASLRRRA has been working with members of the Florida congressional delegation and key congressional committees to get such a program for Class II and III railroads included in the disaster supplemental, spurred on in large part by the devastation experienced by member Seminole Gulf Railway due to Hurricane Ian.

There currently is no federal disaster relief program for Class II and III railroads, despite the existence of such programs for the highway, transit and maritime sectors. Other federal aid programs are little to no help, as they exclude small-business short line railroads or offer only small loans that do not come close to providing enough funding to repair extensive infrastructure damage caused by a severe weather event or other disaster.

In addition to working on a disaster relief program, ASLRRRA's Congressional Affairs Team continues to advocate for short line priorities to be reflected in any appropriations bill. Such priorities include robust funding for Consolidated Railroad Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grants and other major grant programs and no increases to commercial truck size and weight restrictions.

Start of New Congress in January Means Stepped-Up Outreach and Education Efforts

A new group of senators and representatives will be sworn in when the new Congress convenes in early January. Once that happens, ASLRRA staff members will be busy contacting congressional offices to familiarize lawmakers with ASLRRA and the short line railroad industry.

The Association anticipates many new faces in leadership positions on key committees and in both houses of Congress, and each of these newcomers will need to be brought up to speed quickly on short line freight rail priorities. ASLRRA welcomes its members' participation in this process, encouraging them to cultivate relationships with members of their congressional delegation, whether they are newly elected or returning incumbents. Contact ASLRRA Vice President of Congressional Affairs [Zach Radford](#) or Assistant Vice President, Legislative and Regulatory [Crystal Gitchell](#) to get connected to your representatives in Congress.



Employee Health Insurance

The Coalition Health Plan is available exclusively to ASLRRA members, designed to reduce medical premiums and simplify the healthcare experience for employees. [Click to learn more...](#)

ASLRRA New Members

Know a company that would benefit from joining and participating in ASLRRA? Please contact ASLRRA's Senior Vice President of Membership and Business Development [Kathy Keeney](#) via email or on (202) 585-3439.

ASLRRA Welcomes New Associate Business Member Class 1 Professionals



ASLRRA is pleased to welcome [Class 1 Professionals LLC](#) as a new associate business (supplier) member. Class 1, based in Lemont, Illinois, offers construction services that include demolition for replacement and installation of new crossings at rail yards and the right-of-way. It also provides maintenance, renovation,

rehabilitation and inspection services of all ancillary railway support structures, including loading docks, repair shops, snow sheds, platforms, fueling facilities and drainage structures. Our primary contact is Field Manager of Track Maintenance [Aaron Selph](#), who can be reached on (847) 770-2911.

Announcements

ASLRRRA Mourns Former Alaska Governor and Alaska Railroad Corporation President Bill Sheffield

ASLRRRA joins the many who are mourning the passing of former [Alaska Governor Bill Sheffield](#), who was instrumental in building up [ASLRRRA member Alaska Railroad Corporation](#) through such leadership roles as president, CEO and board chairman.

As governor, Sheffield made a deal to purchase the Alaska Railroad from the federal government, making the railroad a state asset and preventing its shutdown. He first joined the Alaska Railroad board after his governor term ended, then becoming president and CEO before later returning to the board.

Sheffield also served as director of the Port of Anchorage and his other professional roles included stints as president of the Alaska Visitors Association, president of the Alaska Chamber of Commerce, member of the Anchorage City Planning Commission and member of the Anchorage Charter Commission.

Short Line Training Center Combines Online Courses with Mobile Simulators for On-Location Learning

Together with Iowa Northern Railway Company, ASLRRRA has introduced the [Short Line Training Center](#), a comprehensive training resource for short line railroads that combines an online Learning Management System (LMS) with a Mobile Technical Training Center equipped with Locomotive Simulators.

The LMS is an online platform and hub that is available at any time to deliver and track industry-specific training and assessments. Features include interactive coursework and assessments and the ability to assign courses to employees, manage team reports and upload training records.

The Mobile Technical Training Center is equipped with two FRA Type II locomotive simulators plus classroom space for six students and an instructor. The center can deliver personalized, instructor-led seminars and locomotive simulator training on location anywhere in the continental United States.

The training center includes generic profiles to match all types of railroad topography to run simulations that closely resemble a railroad's territory without the need to build custom track, enabling railroads to meet a wide range of training and regulatory requirements.

Training is also available at Iowa Northern Railway's Training Center in Waterloo, Iowa, where attendees have access to four FRA Type II locomotive simulators and full classroom facilities for up to 30 students.

View [full details online](#) or contact ASLRRRA Senior Vice President of Education and Business Services [Sabrina Weiss](#) for more information.

ASLRRRA Members Benefit from Coalition Health Plan with HUB International

The Coalition Health Plan is specifically designed for ASLRRRA members looking for a solution to reduce their medical premiums and simplify the healthcare experience for their employees. As the fifth largest broker in the world with over 500 locations in North America, HUB International is well equipped to provide ASLRRRA members with a vast network of benefits experts and best-in-class resources no matter where the member company is located in the US.

Partnering with HUB puts ASLRRRA members at the center of a vast network of experts who provide risk services, claims management, and compliance support. Visit ASLRRRA's [Member Discount Program page](#) and select [Employee Health Insurance](#) to start saving today.

ASLRRA Out and About

Strang Attends Meeting to Help Stand Up FRA Safety Partnership Group

Senior Vice President of Safety, Regulatory and Environmental Policy Jo Strang traveled to Chicago this week to attend a stakeholder meeting for the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) new Railroad Information Sharing Environment (RISE) group. She and other meeting attendees worked to finalize RISE's governance documents and set up a temporary executive board.

RISE is a voluntary safety partnership effort bringing together representatives from freight and commuter railroads, rail labor and the FRA to address rail safety issues by sharing data and working collaboratively to use that data to develop potential solutions.

WEBINARS AVAILABLE ON DEMAND

With nearly 200 recordings available, there's a webinar to meet the needs of everyone on your team. Visit aslrra.org/webinars to view a complete list of available recordings.



ASLRRA Webinars

Upcoming Live Webinars

Tomorrow! [ASLRRA Part 219 Education Materials and Correction Affidavits](#) – Nov. 10, 2022

Join Holly Rainwater, vice president of drug and alcohol programs at Spark TS, Mitch Harris, director of safety, training and regulatory compliance at Rio Grande Pacific, and JR Gelnar, vice president of safety and compliance at ASLRRA to discuss the recently developed Part 219 drug and alcohol educational materials and multiple Correction Affidavits. A working group was established by the Safety and Training Committee to develop these materials to better assist the membership in the requirements of Part 219. Note: Templates and other materials are available for members on ASLRRA's [Website](#).

Thanks to Webinar Sponsor



[CRISI: A Workforce Development Project Case Study](#) – Nov. 15, 2022

The Federal Railroad Administration's Melissa Hatcher and Starr Kidida will provide an overview of the fiscal year 2022 CRISI grant program and share information on program eligibility, highlighting workforce development funding available through CRISI and offering a case study.

On-Demand Webinars

Operation and Safety Webinars Discuss Regulatory Compliance, Utilizing Data

ASLRRA offers a wide variety of recorded webinars focused on many different topics of interest to short line railroaders. Included in the On-Demand Webinar Library are a number of Operations & Safety webinars.

Recordings of these webinars are available at any time to members. Log in to [ASLRRA's On-Demand Webinar page](#) and look in the Operations & Safety category to access the following:

- Common CRB Data Exchange Errors and How to Avoid Them
- Alerts, Early Warnings and Maintenance Advisories
- Repair Reporting for Cars with Alerts and Early Warnings

Visit ASLRRA's [webinar homepage](#) and log in to view all the on-demand offerings in the Association's webinar library. Most of the recordings also have a copy of the accompanying PDF presentation available for download. ASLRRA members can access recordings for free, while non-members can purchase a subscription.

Click [here](#) to learn more about ASLRRA's education offerings.

Industry Events and Announcements

Short Line Safety Institute Releases New Hazardous Materials Safety Tip

The Short Line Safety Institute (SLSI) has released the final installment of a three-part Hazmat Emergency Safety Tip series discussing the D.E.C.I.D.E. process framework for hazardous materials emergency decision making.

The D.E.C.I.D.E. framework comprises six steps, and its goal is to influence the outcome of the emergency response sequence by making decisions that focus on modifying the sequence of events that would otherwise occur naturally.

View a downloadable version of the safety tip [here](#), or watch a video version of the tip [here](#).

This safety tip is just one of the many resources available to short line railroads and their employees. The SLSI also offers training seminars, safety culture assessments, templates and more. All resources are available at no cost to the railroad. Learn more at the [SLSI website](#).

Click [here](#) for a calendar of industry events.

Views & News is published by American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association. Please contact [Amy Krouse](#), editor, with questions or comments.