



January 20, 2021



## ASLRRRA Calls on Governors to Include Transportation Workers in Phase 1 of Vaccine Distribution

ASLRRRA joined a coalition representing transportation employees and contractors in a [letter](#) to the National Governors Association (NGA) calling on states to authorize Phase 1 access to COVID-19 vaccines for essential freight, rail, port and waterway and energy

workers.

A distinction between “frontline essential workers” in Phase 1b and “other essential workers” in Phase 1c in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) vaccine allocation guidance has led to confusion regarding the prioritization of transportation workers. The associations’ letter notes that such a distinction is not made by the Department of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, and makes the case to states to consider transportation workers in Phase 1b vaccinations.

Freight, rail, port and waterway and energy employees make it possible for other essential workers, like healthcare providers, to have access to supplies needed to perform critical functions. Transportation employees also move materials to manufacturers, merchandise and food products to stores and packages and mail to households around the country. They play a crucial role in the nation’s supply chain, and in cases like freight rail, are also responsible for maintaining the infrastructure enabling the movement of people and goods.

Performing these vital functions also increases the chances transportation employees will be exposed to COVID-19, with recent case surges putting them at even greater risk. This makes early vaccination of these employees particularly important.

### Letter Template Helps ASLRRRA Member Employees Obtain the COVID-19 Vaccine

In addition to the letter advocating inclusion of rail employees in Phase 1 of COVID-19 vaccine distribution, ASLRRRA has developed a [vaccine justification letter template](#) for railroad workers to further facilitate vaccine access.

The letter is based on the recommendation from the Department of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) that transportation and logistics workers be considered essential workers eligible for Phase 1 vaccine allocations.

The letter is valid from Jan. 7 to June 30. For help with questions, please contact ASLRRRA’s Vice President of Safety and Compliance [JR Gelnar](#).

ASLRRRA’s vaccine letter template is one of the several ways the Association is helping its members cope with the many complicated issues arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions. On Jan. 26 ASLRRRA and supplier member Bowers & Company CPAs will present a webinar discussing the

most recent COVID-19 relief bill and its impact on businesses and employees. Read more in our webinar section below, or click [here](#) to register.



### FRA Proposed Rule Makes Changes to Brake System Safety Standards

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) issued a [notice of proposed rulemaking](#) (NPRM) suggesting changes to brake system safety standards regarding operations using an electronic air brake slip (eABS) system.

The NPRM offers an alternative regulatory framework for railroads to use when employing an eABS system, but railroads would not be

required to use the system.

One proposed change is the extension of the distance certain individual rail cars can travel without stopping for brake and mechanical tests if those cars have a valid eABS record. Another would allow railroads to add or remove multiple cars from a train without conducting additional brake tests, if the train comprises only cars with eABS records.

ASLRRRA's team is reviewing the NPRM for its potential impact on short lines.

### Applications Now Being Accepted for EPA's Diesel Emissions Reduction Act Grant Program

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is [accepting](#) applications for Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) grants, which offer funding for projects that achieve significant reductions in diesel emissions.

Replacement of locomotive engines and other non-road engines, equipment or vehicles used in construction, cargo handling and more are examples of the projects eligible for funding. Priority will be given to fleets operating in poor-air-quality areas and fleets servicing goods-movement facilities.

Approximately \$46 million in funding is available through this program. Application packages are due March 16.

The EPA will hold three informational [webinars](#) for interested applicants. Follow this [link](#) for a list of questions and answers regarding DERA grants, eligible projects and the application process.

Also, ASLRRRA's [Member Discount Program](#) offers grant-writing assistance through preferred providers who can help railroads submit grant applications.

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## 117<sup>th</sup> Congress Begins to Take Shape Following Today's Inauguration

Happy Inauguration Day! As the Executive Branch begins its duties, the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress is also beginning to take shape.

In the Senate, Georgia Democrats Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff, and Alix Padilla, who was appointed to fill Kamala Harris's vacated seat by California Governor Gavin Newsom were sworn in this afternoon. The addition of both Warnock and Ossoff brings the Senate to a 50-50 split; however, the Democrats will possess the

Senate majority as Vice President Kamala Harris is seated as president of the Senate.

Due to the 50-50 split, Senate leaders will finalize negotiations on a power-sharing agreement that will guide Senate committee assignments. We will share committee assignments when we have them.

In the House, where the Democrats possess a slimmer majority than in the last Congress, Speaker Nancy Pelosi has released the names of the new members on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, which are provided below.

- Congressman-elect Jake Auchincloss of Massachusetts
- Congresswoman-elect Carolyn Bourdeaux of Georgia
- Congressman-elect Kai Kahele of Hawaii
- Congressman Seth Moulton of Massachusetts
- Congresswoman-elect Marie Newman of Illinois
- Congresswoman-elect Marilyn Strickland of Washington
- Congresswoman-elect Nikema Williams of Georgia

**ASLRRRA SAFETY & TRAINING**  
**Reasonable Suspicion Drug & Alcohol Signs and Symptoms Training Video**  
Visit [www.aslrra.org/safety](http://www.aslrra.org/safety) for more info



## ASLRRRA New Members

Know a company that would benefit from joining and participating in ASLRRRA? Please contact ASLRRRA's Vice President of Membership and Business Development [Kathy Keeney](mailto:kathy.keeney@aslrra.org) via email or on (202) 585-3439.



## ASLRRA Welcomes New Associate Business Member RailMark Trucks

We are pleased to welcome to our membership rolls [RailMark Trucks](#), a special-purpose vehicle manufacturer headquartered in Kansas City, Kan. It specializes in purpose-built hi-rail trucks for maintenance of way, signaling and DTL locomotive refueling operations of railroads and railroad contractors.

The company, which is a subsidiary of Skymark Refuelers, has three factory locations: two in Kansas City and one in Findlay, Ohio, as well as sales offices in Minneapolis and Orlando. Our primary contact is [Kevin LaValley](#), Director of Sales & Marketing, who can be reached on (913) 521-4463.

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## ASLRRA Announcements

### ***Railway Age* Magazine Honors 20 Fast Trackers, Including Several ASLRRA-Member Employees**

On Jan. 19, *Railway Age* magazine announced the winners of its annual Fast Trackers 20 Under 40 award, recognizing top performers in the North American rail industry.

This year, *Railway Age* doubled the number of honorees from 10 to 20, recognizing young employees from freight and passenger railroads and supplier and contractor companies who have had a significant impact on their fields or within their organizations.

Eight of the 20 winners work at ASLRRA-member companies, as were two of the ten receiving honorable mentions. *Railway Age* will profile all of them in its upcoming February issue.

ASLRRA congratulates all of this year's honorees!

- **Tomeka Bryant**, New Orleans Public Belt Railroad, manager of marketing and sales
- **Ricardo Chacon**, Patriot Rail and Ports, assistant vice president, yield management
- **Michelle Hartmann-Grippin**, Bergmann, assistant project manager
- **Kaitlyn Hrdlicka**, Wabtec Corp., system architect
- **Danielle Libring**, RailPros, senior project manager
- **Brian McClain**, Genesee & Wyoming Railroad Services, Inc., assistant vice president of regional operations
- **Frank Evan Palazzolo**, Conrail, trainmaster
- **Rachael Peterson**, Watco Companies, executive vice president and chief people officer

Congratulations also to honorable mention recipients:

- **Andrea Dobbelmann**, Progressive Rail, Inc., CFO
- **Terry L. Hartwig**, The Belt Railway Company of Chicago, terminal superintendent

## ASLRRA's Safety and Compliance Resources Include Training Videos

One of the most valued ASLRRA member benefits is access to industry best practices and compliance resources designed specifically for short line operations.

Training videos are a popular and important safety resource available as a direct download from the association website. The [Post-Accident Toxicological Testing video](#) is an interactive training video produced by the industry, with input from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), that provides instruction on when and how to administer post-accident drug and alcohol tests. Federal Regulation Part 219.11(g) requires Post-Accident Toxicological Testing (PATT) training for supervisors of regulated employees. This PATT eLearning course has been reviewed by the FRA and will ensure compliance with the PATT training requirements.

ASLRRA also offers a [Reasonable Suspicion Drug & Alcohol Signs and Symptoms video](#) that provides detailed direction on drug and alcohol testing guidelines. This video teaches railroad workers how to recognize possible impairment, what substances to test for, how to conduct a proper test, and steps to take in case of a positive test, among many other components. Part 219.11(g) requires signs and symptoms training for supervisors of regulated employees. Utilization of this video will ensure compliance.

Safety and training videos are available to non-members for a fee. Visit [www.aslrra.org/safety](http://www.aslrra.org/safety) to access the full complement of safety and compliance tools, resources and information available from the ASLRRA.

Click to learn more about our Member Discount Program!



## ASLRRA Webinars – Live or On-Demand

### Upcoming Webinars Discuss a Variety of Important Rail Topics

Learn how to grow your rail business, understand COVID-19 relief legislation or maintain Part 243 compliance with ASLRRA's January webinars. View our webinar [list](#) here, and register today!

[Short Line Business Development, Growth and Marketing Panel](#) -

January 21, 2021

Join Rob Russell of OmniTRAX and Dan Kippley of Ellis and Eastern Company to discuss growing the railroad business and pitching the benefits of rail to shippers and the communities where short lines operate. ASLRRA President Chuck Baker will facilitate the panel. Registration is free for ASLRRA members.

Sponsored by:



[COVID Relief Bill - PPP and Other Tax Considerations](#) - January 26, 2021

Join financial and tax experts from Bowers & Company CPAs for a discussion of the latest COVID-19 relief bill and what it means for your business and employees. We will cover important topics such as the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), Round 2; employee retention credit; Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA): employer paid leave; and miscellaneous business and individual tax provisions.

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[FRA Part 243: Part 1 of a 2-Part Series](#) - January 27, 2021

This webinar series discusses certain requirements for compliance with Part 243. In part one Mitch Harris of Rio Grande Pacific Corporation, Katie Inouye of Spark Training Solutions and ASLRRRA's JR Gelnar will focus on the initial training requirements including organizing employees depending on occupational type, assessing current programs to identify training gaps and assessing training curriculum to close those gaps, and leveraging the ASLRRRA's 243 template submissions.

Please register for both parts one and two. Registration is free for ASLRRRA members.

Sponsored by:



[FRA Part 243: Part 2 of a 2-Part Series](#) - January 28, 2021

In the second of our two-part series, Mitch Harris of Rio Grande Pacific Corporation, Katie Inouye of Spark Training Solutions and ASLRRRA's JR Gelnar will discuss submission requirements, utilizing the FRA Portal, grandfathering current employees. They will also summarize other 243 requirements including periodic oversight, recordkeeping, contractors and refresher training.

Please register for both parts one and two. Registration is free for ASLRRRA members.

Sponsored by:



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## **ASLRRA's On-Demand Webinars Help Explain Rail Car Alerts and Repairs**

Several of ASLRRA's recorded webinars help explain safety issues related to car health and more. Railinc's Robin McFalls presented a trio of railcar repair webinars, as well as a discussion of common data exchange errors. These webinars were sponsored by Carlogix.

The following titles can be found in the operations and safety category in ASLRRA's On-Demand Webinar library:

- Common CRB Data Exchange Errors and How to Avoid Them
- Alerts, Early Warnings and Maintenance Advisories - Part 1 of 3
- Identifying Car Health Alerts and Needed Action - Part 2 of 3
- Repair Reporting for Cars with Alerts and Early Warnings - Part 3 Of 3

In addition to these webinars, ASLRRA offers more than 100 recordings covering a variety of career fields available for free for ASLRRA members, and by paid subscription for non-members.

[Click here](#) for more ASLRRA events.

## **Industry Events and Announcements**

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

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