



January 27, 2021



Recognize Your Railroad's Accomplishments by Submitting Nominations for ASLRRRA's Awards

Running a successful, safe railroad is not easy. ASLRRRA's industry awards recognizes those members and their employees who work hard every day to excel, and the Association is now accepting nominations to recognize and share their success.

The nomination period closes March 6. Winners will be recognized at ASLRRRA's 2021 Connections Convention in Phoenix, Ariz.

Business Development Awards: The ASLRRRA Business Development Award recognizes Class II and III railroads that have designed and enacted the most innovative and successful business-building initiatives in the small railroad industry. Follow the link to learn more about last year's honorees, recognized for accomplishments including shifting business from truck to rail, building new rail-located facilities and leveraging transload opportunities.

Click [here](#) for award criteria and nomination procedures. Please submit nominations to ASLRRRA's Vice President of Communications [Amy Krouse](#).

Veterans Engagement Award: ASLRRRA's Veterans Engagement Award honors 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. Read about last year's winner, Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis, at the link above.

Award criteria can be found [here](#), and nominations can be submitted [online](#). Contact ASLRRRA's Senior Vice President of Education and Business Services [Sabrina Waiss](#) with questions.

Safety Person of the Year Award: The Safety Person of the Year Award recognizes a non-management employee of a member railroad who works with management on effective safety programs, exhibits a high degree of safety awareness and contributes off-duty time to activities promoting safety awareness in the community.

Nominees are not required to have "safety" in their job title to meet this criteria. Follow the link above to meet Jose Jimenez, a machinist at The Belt Railway Company of Chicago and last year's honoree.

Award criteria can be found [here](#), and nominations can be submitted [online](#). Contact ASLRRRA's Assistant Vice President of Legislative and Regulatory Policy [Crystal Gitchell](#) with questions.

Safety Professional of the Year Award: The Safety Professional of the Year Award is open to management employees of an ASLRRRA member railroad responsible for safety programs, training and the overall management of safe behavior and actions on their railroad(s). Read about last year's award winner, Watco's Senior Vice President of Environmental, Health and Safety Travis Herod, at the link above.

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Find award criteria [here](#), or submit a nomination [online](#). Contact ASLRRRA's Assistant Vice President of Legislative and Regulatory Policy [Crystal Gitchell](#) with questions.

Part 243 Training Rule Compliance Templates and AAR's RAN Messages Now Available to ASLRRRA Members

Training templates to help ASLRRRA members comply with the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) Part 243 training rule are now available [online](#). Members must log in to access the materials. ASLRRRA [webinars](#) held today and tomorrow, and one on Feb. 17, discuss Part 243 compliance.

ASLRRRA members and staff have worked over the past two years to produce training templates that are compliant with the Part 243 training rule, and represent the realities of short line railroad administration and training needs. ASLRRRA also submitted comments urging a delay to the current May 1, 2021 implementation date, but the FRA did not grant an implementation delay.

The Part 243 training rule requires each railroad or contractor that employs one or more safety-related railroad employees to develop and submit a training program to FRA for approval and to designate the minimum training qualifications for each occupational category of employee.

The Part 243 templates are only some of the compliance resources available to ASLRRRA members on the Association's website. There are over a dozen program templates designed specifically to assist short line railroads with compliance, including the FRA-approved Part 214 Roadway Worker Program and Part 237 Bridge Maintenance Program.

In further efforts to provide important industry information to its members, ASLRRRA has also decided to [publish](#) Railway Alert Network (RAN) Situational Awareness Messages on behalf of the Association of American Railroads (AAR).

AAR produces RAN messages periodically to help inform the railroad community when critical safety situations occur. The two most recent reports concern the Jan. 6 riots at the U.S. Capitol and an update on COVID-19 vaccinations.

ASLRRRA encourages its members to review the alerts, which can also be shared with contractors, shippers and other customers and colleagues in law enforcement. For questions on a specific RAN, please contact AAR directly at

Association of American Railroads
Railway Alert Network (RAN)
425 3rd Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024
202-639-2910 or 866-494-4353 (Emergency)
202-639-2950 (Non-Emergency)

For help with questions regarding your railroad's response to a RAN, please contact ASLRRRA's Vice President of Safety and Compliance [JR Gelnar](#).

Two New Resources Help Railroads Plan COVID Vaccine Policy, Share Vaccine Information with Employees



ASLRRRA supplier member Burns White has produced a [document](#) to help railroads plan their company's COVID-19 vaccine policy and understand the law concerning vaccine requirements.

In the document, lawyers at Burns White explain whether a railroad can require

an employee to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Generally, railroads can mandate vaccinations, but exceptions do apply. The document further outlines some considerations employers should make when deciding whether or not to draft a mandatory vaccine policy.

Also discussed is whether businesses can require independent contractors to receive the vaccine, and if employees have a right to know which of their co-workers have been vaccinated.

ASLRRA and Burns White encourage railroads to make decisions regarding their company's vaccine policy now, before vaccines are more widely available to essential transportation workers. The firm notes, however, that this document is not intended as official legal advice, and employers should consult their legal counsel when developing their policies.

In addition to developing a vaccine policy, businesses are faced with the task of conveying important vaccine information to employees. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has released a [COVID-19 vaccine communication toolkit](#) providing resources that help employers achieve that goal.

The toolkit includes tools employers can use virtually or in person to convey the benefits of vaccination and address employees' common questions and concerns. Organizations can access fact sheets in a number of languages, a PowerPoint presentation, an employee letter, printable posters and more.

This information and much more can be found on ASLRRA's [COVID-19 page](#). The Association has compiled resources and links for businesses, as well as industry-focused information regarding legislative relief actions and regulatory issues related to the pandemic.



COMPLIANCE TEMPLATES

Click here for member-exclusive templates and additional resources.

ETHICS REGULATIONS POLICIES REQUIREMENTS

ASLRRA Products & Services



FRA Grants ASLRRA, AAR Waiver of Compliance for PTC RFA Process

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has [granted](#) a request made by ASLRRA and the Association of American Railroads (AAR) for a waiver of compliance to allow certain railroads to use an alternative request for amendment (RFA) process instead of the existing process codified under 49 CFR Section 263.1021.

The waiver applies to any of the associations' member railroads operating an ITC PTC system certified as a mixed PTC system by the FRA. It would also apply to any host railroads obtaining mixed PTC system certification in the future.

Under the waiver, affected railroads will be allowed to jointly file an RFA with a streamlined list of content requirements, and the RFAs would generally be considered self-executing within 30 days of the filing date.

ASLRRA Developing Response to NTSB Safety Recommendation

ASLRRA is responding to a safety recommendation issued by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). This recommendation is the result of NTSB's final report on a collision between two Union Pacific trains in 2018.

ASLRRA staff has distributed the recommendation to the safety and training committee, and the Association will also be hosting a webinar to review this accident, which was due to air brake failure.

Please review the report and ASLRRA's safety recommendation [here](#).

RRB Q&A Defines the "Current Connection" Requirement for Annuities

The Railroad Retirement Board's (RRB) [January edition](#) of its online question and answer series focuses on the phrase "current connection with the railroad industry" in defining eligibility requirements for annuities payable by the RRB.

The information explains how an employee can meet the current connection requirement, such as having railroad service in at least 12 months of the 30 months immediately preceding the month railroad retirement annuity begins.

There are also circumstances that can break a current connection, including full or part-time work for a nonrailroad employer or acceptance of a buy-out as part of voluntary termination. Follow the link above to learn more.

Buckingham Branch Railroad, ASLRRA Discuss Short Line Priorities with NTSB's Homendy, Staff

Steve Powell, president of ASLRRA member Buckingham Branch Railroad (BB), joined members of ASLRRA's policy and government affairs teams in a [virtual meeting](#) with National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) member Jennifer Homendy and members of NTSB staff to discuss important short line issues, including the industry's contributions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

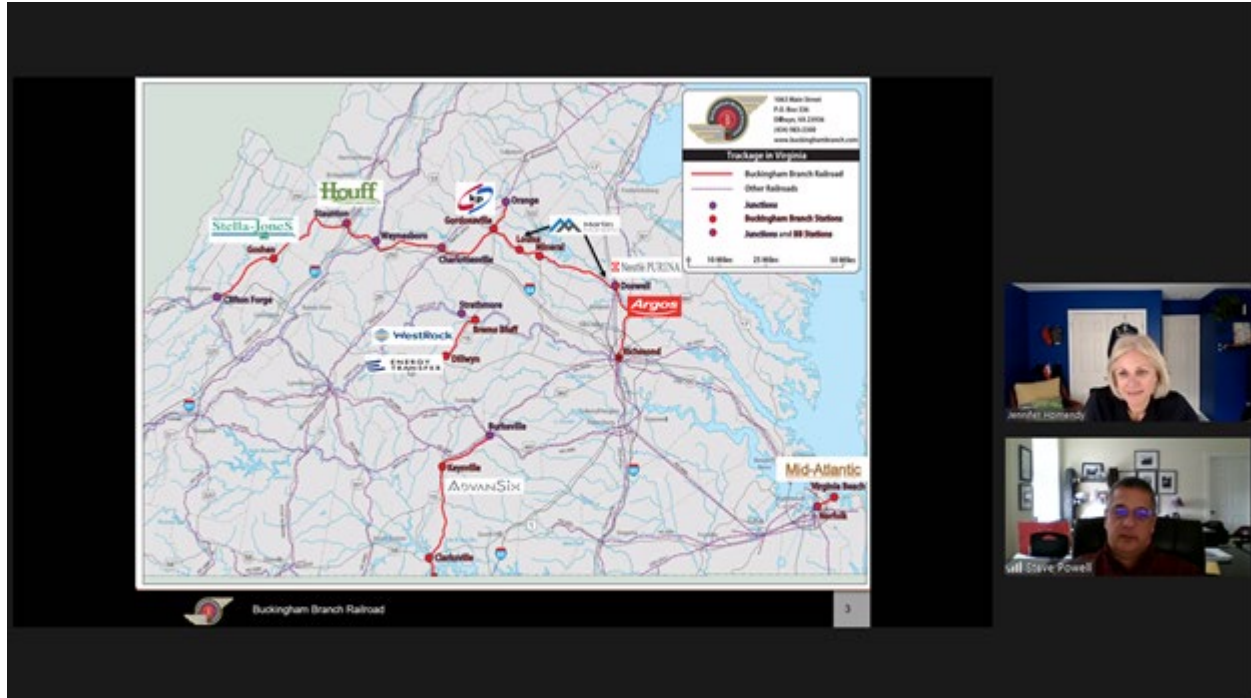
Powell talked to Homendy about BB's operations in Virginia, describing how the railroad continues to invest in infrastructure and technology upgrades to continuously improve safety and operations, in spite of the current economic pressure created by the pandemic.

"During normal operations, I would have liked to visit in person, but it's not safe to travel, so I want to thank the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association for being creative and figuring out a new way for short line and regional railroads to share all the great work they are doing for our nation," said Homendy.

The discussion of technology also included an explanation of BB's current projects, working with third-party partners to explore the benefits of autonomous geometry track testing on box cars, drones for inspections and more.

"This meeting gave Member Homendy and her staff the opportunity to better understand the positive impact that government policy actions can have on the short line industry, and the technology advancements our members are using to move the industry forward, safely," said ASLRRA's Vice President of Government Affairs Tom Lynch. "ASLRRA member participation is critical to the success of these meetings, and we are sincerely grateful for their continued willingness to provide front-line perspective."

ASLRRA members looking to schedule meetings with lawmakers or regulators, or who are interested in learning about the process, can contact [Crystal Gitchell](#), ASLRRA's assistant vice president of legislative and regulatory policy.



Steve Powell, president of ASLRRRA member Buckingham Branch Railroad, explains his company's operations to National Transportation Safety Board member Jennifer Homendy during a Zoom meeting.

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](#) via email or on (202) 585-3439.



ASLRRRA Welcomes New Associate Business Member Meritus Executive Search Excellence

We are pleased to welcome to our membership rolls [Meritus Executive Search Excellence LLC](#), a newly formed firm based in metropolitan Chicago. The firm provides executive search recruitment, strategy, advisory and placement services. Its motto is: We Are Your Who: Leading the future of rail industry executive search.

Our primary contact is CEO [Merritt Canfield](#), who can be reached on (773) 899-1650.



Congress Begins to Announce Committee Membership

The House has begun announcing committee membership. Two committees your ASLRRRA team follows closely due to their role in determining transportation policy and funding are Transportation & Infrastructure and Appropriations. Click the links below to access a list of names. If you have relationships with any of the new members of Congress, we would welcome hearing from you. The Senate is expected to make similar announcements about their committee

rosters in the coming weeks.

T&I Democrats: <https://transportation.house.gov/news/press-releases/chair-defazio-announces-transportation-and-infrastructure-subcommittee-chairs-and-democratic-committee-roster>

T&I Republicans: <https://republicans-transportation.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=405170>

Appropriations Democrats: <https://appropriations.house.gov/news/press-releases/delauro-announces-appropriations-committee-roster>

Appropriations Republicans: <https://republicans-appropriations.house.gov/news/press-releases/granger-announces-republican-committee-leadership-welcomes-new-members-117th>

Click to learn more about our Member Discount Program!

The image displays a collection of logos for various member discount program partners. The logos are arranged in two rows. The top row includes 'aE', 'BERGMANN ARCHITECTS ENGINEERS PLANNERS', 'Elavon | usbank', 'GREX', and 'GTS'. The bottom row includes 'HDR', 'McGRUFF, SEIBELS & WILLIAMS, INC.', and 'Tech Mahindra'.

ASLRRRA Announcements

Reports Show Effectiveness of Short Line Safety Institute's Hazmat Training Program

Analysis of the Short Line Safety Institute's (SLSI) Hazardous Materials Training Program [shows](#) that the program effectively transfers crucial safety information to its participants, with a strong majority of participants having a positive view of their experience.

The SLSI recently released two [reports](#) detailing the results of this analysis, which studied hazmat training events offered to short line railroad employees over a three-year period. One [report](#) examines feedback from participant's post-training surveys. and over 97 percent of participants gave a positive review of the program.

The second [report](#) compared scores from pre- and post-training tests given to participants. Analysis showed a 10 percent increase in test scores, suggesting that the SLSI's hazmat training program increases participants' knowledge of the subject matter.

The [Hazardous Materials Training Program](#) is meant to supplement a railroad's own training efforts, and is provided at zero cost thanks to a grant from the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA). Training sessions cover topics including various agency regulations and reporting requirements.

Other programs provided by the SLSI to address hazmat training include the recently released [Fast Class Training Videos](#) available on the institute's website.

Space Still Available in SLSI's Leadership Development Training Course

The Short Line Safety Institute (SLSI) will present a virtual version of its popular [Leadership Development Training Course](#) in March, as its February class has filled up.

The interactive program is meant to help railroad managers cultivate crucial leadership skills, such as providing effective communication, delivering constructive feedback and building strong teams. It is available at no cost to participants.

Registration for the March 9-12 course is limited to 20 people, in order to maximize opportunities for participation in an online format. Follow this [link](#) to register online.

Save Money on Business Products and Services with ASLRRRA's Member Discount Program

The money saved by using [ASLRRRA's Member Discount Program](#) partners could pay for annual dues and then some! ASLRRRA's Member Discount Program leverages the buying power of all association members to secure discounted pricing on essential business products and services.

ASLRRRA members - regardless of size or individual purchasing power - receive exclusive access to programs tailored specifically for the short line railroad industry, discount pricing, special offers, and guaranteed exceptional service. Whether you operate five miles of track or fifty, you can save thousands of dollars a year on products and services you already use.

From railroad tie inspections and payment processing to grant writing and PTC products and services, ASLRRRA's Discount Program Partners have you covered. New partners/categories will be added soon - visit www.aslrra.org/discounts for details and start saving today!

ASLRRRA Out and About

Association President Baker Talks Short Lines at Kentucky Conference; Covers Industry Perseverance in Railway Age Magazine Column

As president of ASLRRRA, Chuck Baker is often asked to share his insight into the state of the short line industry. Most recently, he spoke to attendees at the Kentuckians for Better Transportation's virtual Kentucky Transportation Conference, and he contributed a [column](#) to *Railway Age* magazine.

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In his Jan. 22 Kentucky address, Baker focused on rail networks in the state, praising the work of ASLRRRA members active there and explaining the benefits of having a robust freight rail network. He also identified areas short lines are working to improve, such as making it easier for customers to track shipments in real time.

Baker's *Railway Age* piece looked at how, despite the COVID-19 pandemic and its accompanying disruptions, the short line industry was able to accomplish its top legislative priority: achieving permanence for the 45G short line tax credit.

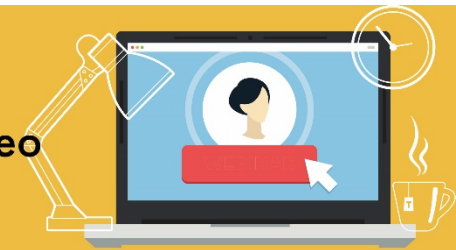
Baker credits the perseverance of his industry colleagues and Capitol Hill lawmakers and staff members who worked tirelessly for 45G. The credit first became law in 2004 and had been extended on a temporary basis every year or so until 2020, despite its proven popularity and the economic benefits it offered.

The article concluded with a review of other legislative issues that will now take center stage for ASLRRRA and short lines, including, in the immediate future, building relationships with the new president, his administration and the incoming Congress.

ASLRRRA SAFETY & TRAINING

Post-Accident Toxicological Testing Video

Visit www.aslrra.org/safety for more info



ASLRRRA Webinars – Live or On-Demand

Upcoming Webinars

[FRA Part 243: Part 2 of a 2-Part Series](#) - January 28, 2021 -
Extended to 90 Minutes!

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 note: The duration of this webinar has been extended from 60 to 90 minutes to allow for more questions to be answered during the Q&A period.

Registration is free for ASLRRRA members. Those who may have missed today's Part 1 webinar will be able to access it in ASLRRRA's [On-Demand Webinar](#) library.

Sponsored by:



[Coalition Health Plan, an Exclusive ASLRRRA Member Benefit](#) - February 16, 2021 (Note new date)

Jeff Wipperman and Mark Avery, senior vice president and practice leader, employee benefits, respectively, at HUB International will provide an overview of the Coalition Health Plan, specifically designed for ASLRRRA members looking for a solution to reduce their medical premiums and simplify the healthcare experience for their employees. This webinar is available only to ASLRRRA members.

[FRA Part 243 Discussion and Q&A](#) - February 17, 2021

In this discussion, moderated by Federal Railroad Administration Staff Director of Human Performance Programs Robert Castiglione, along with ASLRRRA Safety Committee Chair Mitch Harris and Vice President of Safety and Compliance JR Gelnar, participants will talk about the Part 243 program and compliance procedures. This is intended to be an interactive session and attendees will have an opportunity to participate in Q&A throughout the presentation. Registration is free for ASLRRRA members.

Sponsored by:



ASLRRRA's On-Demand Webinars Offer Options in Marketing and Business Development

In order to reach the most people possible, ASLRRRA offers its webinars in recorded form after the live presentation ends. These on-demand webinars are available for free to ASLRRRA members, and by paid subscription to non-members.

Some of ASLRRRA's most popular titles in the marketing and business development categories are listed below. They can be found in ASLRRRA's [On-Demand Webinar library](#).

- Not in my Backyard: Responding/Reacting to NIMBYism in the Community
- Using Social Media as a Business Development Tool
- A Practical Guide to the Railroad Industry Agreement (RIA)

In addition to these webinars, ASLRRRA offers more than 100 recordings covering a variety of career fields. Follow the link above to learn more.

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

Industry Events and Announcements

Operation Lifesaver Offers New Safety Resources for Kids, Low-Clearance Vehicle Drivers

Operation Lifesaver's newest educational resources help two different groups achieve the same result - staying safe around trains, tracks and railroad crossings.

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Train Safety Savvy is Operation Lifesaver's first [interactive online game](#) meant to educate children about railroad safety. It is free to play and can be found on the organization's [For Kids](#) page.

The game, designed for kids ages 7 to 10, teaches general safety messages and trespass prevention information, and teaches basic railroad signs and signals. Players choose one of four characters to take virtual train trips around the United States, completing challenges and answering questions along the way.

Besides the new game, Operation Lifesaver has released several public service announcements (PSAs) to help drivers of low-clearance vehicles make safe choices, particularly around railroad crossings. The safety tips help drivers understand if their vehicle has a low ground clearance and explain how to recognize warning signs before railroad crossings and what to do if they get stuck.

The [PSAs](#) come in audio and video versions, at lengths of 15, 30 and 60 seconds. They are also available in Spanish and with English and Spanish subtitles.

EPA Holding Informational Webinars for DERA Grant Program

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is offering three informational [webinars](#) to assist those interested in applying for Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) grants, which offer funding for projects that achieve significant reductions in diesel emissions. One webinar took place yesterday, and the next two are scheduled for Feb. 3 and 11.

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

IRPT App Informs Users of Issues Affecting Water Transportation

ASLRRRA reminds its members that Inland Rivers, Ports & Terminals, Inc. (IRPT) has a [free mobile app](#) providing weekly updates on issues affecting operations at various ports and waterways.

The app gathers information from the U.S. Coast Guard, regional waterway associations, boat captains and more, helping make app users aware of issues like scheduled and unscheduled maintenance operations and emergency notifications.

Follow the link above to learn more about the app and find download instructions.

[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.