

highlights

OFFICE OF SAFETY NEWS

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TWO NEW PROPOSED STANDARDS ISSUED...Proposed rules which would set standards for lubrication of journal bearings on freight cars and for prohibiting the use of certain freight cars as well as various components were published in the Federal Register on November 17. They are the second and third in a series of rule-making proposals relating to railroad freight cars. A previous notice dealt with minimum safety standards. The lubrication proposal would require repacking of plain bearing boxes every 24 months, or in the case of cars whose plain bearing boxes are equipped with rear seals, box lid seals, and journal stops, every 30 months. Roller bearings must be lubricated every 12 to 36 months depending on description and size. With regard to the second rule, the majority of the proposed prohibited freight car components are already barred by industry rules from cars interchanged between carriers. The FRA proposal however, would not be limited to interchange cars, but would apply to operation of any cars having prohibited components or to operation of any cars over 50 years old. Public hearings will be held on the standards in January.

CHIEF COUNSEL APPOINTED...Donald W. Bennett, a Cleveland, Ohio, lawyer, has been appointed as FRA's new Chief Counsel. In private practice since 1960, the 42 year old Bennett's background includes representing railroad labor organizations before two Presidential emergency boards established under the Railway Labor Act, and various Federal regulatory agencies, including the Interstate Commerce Commission and the Department of Transportation, and has participated in extensive rule-making proceedings and appeals relating to railroad safety matters. Prior to engaging in private practice, Bennett served as an attorney for the former New York Central Railroad in Cleveland. He received his B.S. and J.D. from Ohio State University. Former Chief Counsel Robert Kessler is now in Denver serving as DOT Secretarial Representative.

REORGANIZATION PROGRESSES...Work on setting up guidelines and establishing goals for the Office of Safety is underway and a definitive program for implementation of the goals is being worked out. The reorganization, which became effective November 13, is expected to greatly enhance our ability to carry out our expanded responsibilities under the 1970 Safety Act. The expansion in role from

being solely an enforcement group now also puts us into the fields of education and expanded cooperation with the carriers. We are now entering a new phase of responsibility with entirely new areas of jurisdiction to be considered in track and structures, rolling stock, operating practices, employee occupational safety, and employee qualifications. This next year will be one of major change for the Office of Safety. Although since 1969 our efforts have had considerable success in reducing major train accidents, our approach will now be somewhat different and directed towards the railroad safety problem on a more systematic basis.

TRANSPORTATION SAFETY WORKSHOP HELD...The Department of Transportation, in conjunction with the Florida DOT and Florida Technological University, held a National Transportation Safety Education and Manpower Training Workshop in Orlando last month. Purpose of the get-together was to review the safety problems of all modes of transportation, identify occupational skills groups needed to cope with the problems, evaluate common problems and modal differences involved, and to develop recommendations and guidelines for curriculum development in transportation safety education. Those who attended the conference felt that the bringing together of multimodal transportation managers, operators, government policy makers and educators met a critical need in the field of transportation safety education. They are optimistic that the results of the meetings will ultimately bear fruit in a lowered toll of accidents throughout our entire transportation system.

FLEXI-VAN REPAIRS UNDERWAY...The Penn Central Railroad has reported repair of some 200 of the 1,300 cars which were taken out of service on September 20 as a result of an FRA emergency order prohibiting their use due to discovery of cracks in the longitudinal center sill members. Inspection of the cars showed nearly 200 of them to be without cracks and they were returned to service immediately. The Railroad has submitted a formal repair program to OS for the remainder of the cars they will want to put back into use. The plan is currently under evaluation.

NEW FACE IN HAZARDOUS MATERIALS OFFICE...Charles E. Kreh joined the Hazardous Materials Branch on Monday, November 27, and has been assigned to concentrating on analyzing incidents involving tank cars carrying hazardous materials. He will also be developing revisions to the FRA Tank Car Specifications. Mr. Kreh comes to FRA from the Bureau of Explosives, where he had served as Technical Representative since 1970. He began his career in railroading with the B&O Railroad in 1948. In 1964, he joined the Bureau of Explosives, AAR, as a District Inspector in Kansas City and later in New Orleans. While in that capacity, he was the Bureau's representative at the Southern Railway accident in Laurel, Mississippi. In his most recent position, he represented the Bureau on the AAR Tank Car Committee and served as a project engineer on the AAR-RPI Railroad Tank Car Safety Research and Test Project. Mr. Kreh is married and has three children.

ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSES SAFETY COUNCIL... Administrator Ingram told a recent meeting of the National Safety Council in Chicago that with the authority FRA now has under the Rail Safety Act of 1970, "We have both the right and duty to see to it that every component of this business is as safe as it can possibly be made." He noted the need for uniformity of equipment and said that it not only will provide for greater safety for employees but also "goes hand-in-hand with easier and better inspection." The Administrator emphasized the need to pay special attention to the "human factor" in increasing railroad safety and told his audience that "on-the-job accidents in all categories of employees, and especially among train crews, are on the upswing. In the serious accidents we have investigated in recent months," he said, "almost half were due to failure of train crew members. This includes rear end collisions and derailments on curves. Excessive speed frequently is the immediate cause. But it isn't always easy to put your finger on the underlying cause of such 'people type' accidents...The railroad business, as well as all of industry, is becoming increasingly aware of what nowadays is called 'the human factor.' Too many machines have been designed without consideration of the limitations of the humans who have to operate them. The cost of modifying the machines in the light of this new insight generally is prohibitive. But conceivably, we can change the modus operandi and better fit the more adaptable man to the machine--and see to it that new machines are designed around the man." Mr. Ingram also suggested an exchange program with the members of the Council and FRA safety experts in order to be able to provide the railroads with an even broader group with which they can work on some of the knotty problems involved. "We will send you our own experts in specific safety areas," he said, "work with you on developing safety programs, training programs, or whatever will be useful to accomplish goals in safety."

JOURNAL BEARING REPORT PUBLISHED... A comprehensive report on the magnitude, scope and consequences of overheated freight car journals has been published and is available on request to the Office of Standards and Procedures. The report considers the factors of weather and visibility; temperature; speed; bearing type and the effect on journal failures. The report shows that despite a 123 percent increase in total train derailments and an increase in 47 percent of derailments caused by equipment failures, derailments caused by journal failures have remained fairly constant. However, FRA is not content with maintaining the status quo and has, as noted above, published a proposed rule which is intended to solve the problem.

VISIBILITY OF TRAINS TO BE STUDIED... The Transportation Systems Center at Cambridge, Massachusetts, has agreed to make a study of the problem of obtaining a system by which passenger carrying rail vehicles could be made visible to oncoming or following trains from a minimum distance of one quarter mile. Color schemes, illumination levels, identification lights, and recognition

pattern standardization are to be the primary points of investigation. The purpose of the study is to provide the OS with technical support which will serve as a foundation for possible future regulatory action on the visibility of the trailing end of all trains.

LOANS AVAILABLE FOR AGNES VICTIMS...Railroads hard hit by Hurricane Agnes and the South Dakota floods will be able to apply for Federal loans to restore essential public services under an Emergency Rail Facilities Restoration Act signed recently by President Nixon. Over 1,000 miles of railroad lines operated by 16 rail carriers were affected by last June's storms. Under the legislation, the Department can approve low interest loans for those storm stricken railroads which are in reorganization, show operating losses during the past two years, or sustained damages in excess of revenues.

U. N. DANGEROUS GOODS MEETING ATTENDED...Quentin H. Banks of the Office of Hazardous Materials represented the FRA last week at a meeting of the United Nations Committee of Experts on the Transportation of Dangerous Goods in Geneva, Switzerland. The two week meeting is a working conference involving transportation experts from several nations. Classification and packaging standards for international trade are being developed along with a recommended universal hazardous materials labeling system. Recommendations from the meetings will be incorporated into a U. N. regulation proposal.

AGREEMENT SIGNED ON OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY ENFORCEMENT...The Department has signed a "memorandum of understanding" with the Department of Labor on enforcement of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, and have also signed an interim agreement to establish procedures for handling employee complaints against unsafe working conditions in the railroad industry. The purpose of the joint action is to improve safety in the railroad industry.

ICGR HEARING HELD...The National Transportation Safety Board conducted a public hearing December 4 in Chicago on the Illinois Central Gulf Railroad commuter train collision which took 44 lives and injured some 300 other passengers last October 30. Safety Board Chairman John H. Reed said that "The primary purpose of the hearing is to assemble the most complete and accurate factual record possible. After careful analysis of all the facts at hand, a final report will be issued setting forth the Safety Board's determination of probable cause. Appropriate recommendations to help prevent recurrence of such a tragic accident may be made at any time."

HELP NEEDED...Any items you think may be of interest to OS readers of the newsletter would not only be appreciated but gratefully accepted. We need to know what is going on in the field as well as letting the Regions know what is happening in Washington. Please send your news highlights to Jo Ann Sloane, Room 5423.