

# highlights

OFFICE OF SAFETY NEWS

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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20591  
VOLUME 1 NUMBER 5

January 19, 1973

FUEL SHORTAGE AFFECTS RAILROADS...The severe fuel shortage which has hit the Midwest in the past few weeks is also having its effects on the railroads. Several midwestern railroads have been notified by their suppliers that locomotive fuel oil deliveries were to be cut back by as much as 20 to 25 percent. Because the railroads have limited fuel inventories on hand, a cutback in deliveries over any period in excess of one to two weeks could result in serious impairment of rail service. With the freight car supply already tight as a result of the Soviet grain movement, such a reduction in service could precipitate a major car supply crisis. Preliminary indications from oil industry sources suggest that the fuel shortage could last as long as 60 to 90 days, depending in part on the weather. Certain carriers have already reduced service in order to conserve fuel. The Soo Line, operating 4,600 miles of line from Illinois to Montana has reduced power on trains, imposed a 40 mph maximum speed limit, and curtailed certain branch line and local freight services. The Burlington Northern, operating 25,000 miles of line between Chicago, Texas and the Pacific Northwest, has reduced speed on many trains from 60 to 50 mph. Petroleum companies in the Midwest indicate that they have reduced supplies to many customers, giving priority to certain "essential" services such as home heating, hospitals, etc. American Oil Company, affiliated with Standard Oil Company (Indiana), announced a 20 percent reduction in diesel fuel deliveries to all transportation users. Other suppliers are reportedly making similar cuts. Newspapers have reported delays in barge, airline and rail service as a result of fuel shortages.

FRA PROPOSES ALTERNATIVES...Three alternatives to counteract the effects of the fuel shortage on the railroads have been proposed by FRA: 1. Reduction in sulphur content limitations imposed by the Environmental Protection Agency. This would have an adverse environmental impact, but could be done on a

temporary basis only. Estimated increased production as a result would be roughly 500,000 barrels per day, or about 13 percent of present consumption (4 million barrels per day). 2. Allow increased fuel oil prices. Present prices were frozen at depressed summer levels (as of August 1, 1971) and there is little or no economic incentive for refiners to increase fuel oil production. The price of domestic fuel oil is frozen at approximately 11.7 cents per gallon, whereas imported fuel oil is readily marketable at 14 or 15 cents per gallon. 3. Issuance of crude oil import credits to the various modes in proportion to their priority, which can in turn be exchanged for diesel fuel deliveries. This would possibly provide incentives for the oil companies to divert fuel to the transport sector.

...AND PROVIDES HELP...The Hazardous Materials Branch spent a number of hours late last month in tracking down tank cars that could be put into service. They found 39 cars of L.P.G. stored on a leased track of Southern Pacific Company at Medano Spur, for Standard Oil of California and 30 cars held by the Public Service Gas and Electric Company of New Jersey near Newark. A unit train of 26 cars of L.P.G. was run on the Penn Central out to Indianapolis on Christmas day. The Branch's efforts were undoubtedly appreciated by many, but an especially appreciative word of thanks came from Senator Birch Bayh of Indiana.

TRACK STANDARDS AMENDED...A series of amendments to the track standards which were promulgated last October 16 were printed in the Federal Register January 5, and became effective the same day. The major modifications involved qualifications of track inspectors or supervisors; speed limits for passenger trains; and operations over defective rail. Section 213.7 was amended to provide an alternative to the requirement for at least one year of field experience before individuals could qualify as track inspectors or supervisors. The amendment provides for a combination of some experience and training from an appropriate course or educational program. Section 213.9 has been amended to establish higher speed limits for passenger trains than freight trains operating over classes 1 through 5 track. However, the request for an increase in the speed limit on class 6 track was not granted at this time. Section 213.113 was revised to provide for greater flexibility in operating over a defective rail until the rail is replaced.

RAIL TRANSIT INSPECTION MADE. . . OS personnel made an inspection of the New Haven Transit cars at General Electric's facility in Erie, Pennsylvania on January 11. In addition to checking for apparent visual compliance, the calculations on car body strength and rigorous testing were also made. Additional inspections are planned at other facilities and the OS will become increasingly involved in the near future in safety in the rapid transit field.

HOURS OF SERVICE ACT INTERPRETED. . . On December 26, 1972, the maximum hours of duty of employees engaged in or connected with the movement of trains were reduced from 14 hours to 12 hours. The 12-hour limitation applies whether the employee's service is continuous or is broken or interrupted by valid interim periods available for rest. However, as interpreted by the FRA, if the service is broken, the employee must receive 8 consecutive hours off duty at the end of the 24-hour period which began at the time the employee first went on duty following a statutory off-duty period of at least 8 or 10 consecutive hours even though his total time on duty during this period comprises less than 12 hours. This assures the employee that a work tour comprised of broken duty will not exceed 24 hours without an opportunity for full rest.

ADMINISTRATOR ATTENDS LIGHT DENSITY CONFERENCE. . . A symposium on economic and public policy factors influencing light density rail line operation was held in Boulder, Colorado, January 10-11 and the keynote speaker at the conference was Administrator Ingram. He said that a more realistic approach to low-density and branch line problems was needed and that alternatives for shippers on lines that should be abandoned must be found. "The low-density segments of the national rail system are actually being subsidized by the heavily used main lines," Administrator Ingram said. "This fact becomes self-evident when we realize that there are about 21,000 miles of under-utilized track which accounts for only one-half of one percent of all revenues--but about 10% of the track. On that 10% of the railroads, only an average of nine carloads of freight per mile per year originates, and nine carloads of freight a year is not enough to run a train. And trying to make a case for that railroad being essential to the national interest can be far-fetched." Some of the alternative solutions mentioned by the Administrator included local government acquisition and operation of a line, converting sections of parallel tracks to "as needed" feeder service, modified highway tractors to transship freight

to a railhead, containerization, relocation in warehousing or changes in delivery systems. The two-day conference was attended by leaders from state and Federal Government, regulatory bodies, shippers, railroad management, rail labor, and the academic community.

CAB ACCIDENT STUDY ISSUED. . .A study identifying and categorizing the major hazards to personnel in locomotive accidents has been released by the FRA. Entitled "Identification and Categorization of Accidents and Injuries in Cabs of Locomotives," the study was carried out by Central Technology, Inc. of Silver Spring, Maryland, under the direction and guidance of the Locomotive Cab Committee. In its conclusions the report points to the need for designing greater elemental safety in strength and location of the control compartment in locomotive cabs. It also emphasized the necessity of providing more "livable" environmental conditions for the cab interior and elimination of obvious safety hazards. The report notes that, "The wide range of safety problems evidenced by the data collected strongly indicates that a complete design approach to the entire cab environment is necessary."

CAB REVIEW CONDUCTED. . .Region 4 Director Guy McConnell and two Washington office staff members went to General Motors Electro-Motive Division plant in LaGrange, Illinois, 1/10/73 for a general safety review of an enginemen's cab. Particular emphasis was placed on the new AAR-recommended control stand, safety features and the general cab arrangement. The group also inspected a recently built ATSF "F" type locomotive in Chicago.

TANK CAR INVESTIGATION UNDERWAY. . .The FRA's concern with hazardous materials tank car safety has initiated another industry-wide investigation into tank car construction and maintenance. Previously about 280 tank cars utilizing certain 6-wheel, 150-ton trucks with the Simplex Brake arrangements had design and maintenance problems. It has now been reported that these particular tank cars have a cracking problem in their truck bolsters. Also, some carriers have reported that these cars have experienced difficulty in curve negotiability resulting in some yard derailments. Consequently, shippers, car owners, and other interested parties have been asked to furnish their present and proposed inspection/repair programs to correct this situation.

UNION OFFICIAL ELECTED. . .Robert W. Folden of the Operating Practices Branch has been elected Secretary-Treasurer of AFGE Local 2814. He took over his new duties January 1, replacing Ralph P. Utter who resigned for health reasons.

REMINDER ON DUTY HOURS ISSUED. . . Under Secretary Beggs recently sent a memorandum to the various Administrations and Secretarial offices regarding employee adherence to hours of duty. "Recently it has been called to our attention that offices in the Department are becoming lax in requiring employees to fully adhere to their official duty hours," the memorandum stated. "These provide an eight-hour day with one-half hour for lunch. Tardiness, long lunch hours, and early departures are only some of the complaints.... Any unauthorized absences or tardiness must be charged to appropriate leave, and in cases of frequent violations, other steps must be considered." FRA Administrator Ingram said that all FRA employees are expected to adhere 100% to the regular 8-hour work day.

INTERCHANGE PROBLEMS DISCUSSED. . . Associate Administrator Rogers and staff met January 10 with representatives of the Rock Island and Southern Pacific Railroads to discuss train interchange problems, condition of equipment, and 500-mile inspections. Interpretations of laws, rules and regulations were discussed, problems were identified and corrections outlined.

THANKS. . . Christmas means a lot to all of us, but again this year mine was made especially nice by the many personal comments on the Christmas cards I received from our field personnel. Therefore, I wish to take this opportunity to express my most heartfelt thanks to each of you for the fine support you have given me.



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