

# RAILWORKS® TODAY

*A monthly newsletter for employees of  
RailWorks Corporation and its subsidiaries*

## Mechanics Keep Machines in Motion



Mechanics play a critical role in keeping production gang equipment in top operating condition, routinely servicing track machinery when work is completed and as needed while in progress. Their efforts have contributed to high uptime performance for RailWorks crews, not unlike this RailWorks Track Systems tie gang rehabilitating Genesee & Wyoming's Central Oregon & Pacific Railroad (CORP) near the California-Oregon border.

**G**etting time on our customers' track is a precious commodity. Once we're on the track, we need our equipment to operate as intended so we can get as much work done as the window allows. Our mechanics make that possible day in and day out.

More than two dozen RailWorks mechanics (with help from an army of equipment managers, shop supervisors, equipment operators, laborers and others) are at the core of keeping the company's 2,000 licensed vehicles and 4,115 large-capital assets on the road or the rail in North America. These essential team members are critical to maintaining productivity and getting work done for our customers.

"A good portion of the work we do depends on having the equipment work-ready every day," says Richard Carney, vice president for RailWorks Track Systems' West and Central regions in the United States. "The mechanics are the unsung heroes in the background who make it happen."

Edgar Butsch is corporate equipment manager for yard and shop operations in the United States and Canada. "It's like we're a spoke in a wagon wheel," he says of the mechanics' role. "The hub is the corporate office, and each spoke supports the outer rim and the hub itself. You might make it around without one spoke, but not for long."

RailWorks mechanics work for their regions, either in a shop, or with a production gang. Shop mechanics' days are scheduled, and the work typically comes to them. Field mechanics might be dedicated to a gang or project, going job to job, walking the equipment line and thoroughly inspecting each piece of equipment. Depending on how remote the jobsite is, as can be the case with some projects in Canada, a mechanic might stay with a crew 30 or more days at a time. Either way, the ongoing dialog between mechanics and operators is critical to monitoring performance and evaluating and servicing equipment.

## Mechanics Keep Machines in Motion *from page 1*

Whether working in the shop or the field, mechanics succeed based on their knowledge of the equipment, especially equipment that is unique to the railroad industry. They note the complexities involved in maintaining road tractors, loaders and backhoes and particularly tampers, regulators, spikers and other specialty equipment.

"It's hard to just go down to the local shop and find someone who can work on a 6700 (tampler)," says Harry Stonebarger, a mechanic out of RailWorks Track Services' Bridgeton, MO, office, who is responsible for equipment based in the St. Louis and Vincennes, IL, locations. "It takes experience." Keith Zigler, a mechanic based in Chehalis, WA, agrees. "An auto mechanic has a lot of the same skills (as we do), but nothing compares to all the hydraulics and pneumatics we work on."

Much of a mechanic's familiarity with industry equipment comes through on-the-job experience. Mechanics also pursue formal training, like Keith did at the Harsco School in Fairmont, MN. "Through RailWorks, I went to a two-day course and received certification on inspecting and repairing hi-rail gear for pickups and larger equipment. I definitely learned a lot, anything from getting parts to doing the actual inspection, weighing the axels – it was a good course." In Canada, PNR RailWorks mechanics are certified as truck and coach or heavy equipment technicians, or both. To fulfill requirements for each certification, mechanics complete requisite hours in an apprenticeship, on-the-job training and in-school training, and must pass a written exam.

RailWorks relies on its mechanics to keep equipment and tools in safe operating condition and also to provide insight into our operations. "It's the job of mechanics to not only dive in to get something repaired and back on the rail so it can work, but to also understand the work schedule and the cost of the repair," says Edgar. Mechanics, he says, are skilled technicians called on to evaluate job timelines against options to repair equipment (in-house or elsewhere) or to replace it through rebuilding, purchase or rental. "It's their responsibility to understand if something is worth putting money into or not."

Equipment Manager Dale Morgan in Chehalis explains this role. "It's the experience of how to judge when it's really necessary for \$350,000 to \$450,000 tamper rebuild," says the third-generation mechanic who worked for 20 years as contractor before working for RailWorks. "I try to get as much life as I can out of a machine. I obviously try to do a lot in house and outsource it when it makes sense." Dale and other mechanics take note that when an engine has low mileage and systems check out, they can maintain longevity by rebuilding or replacing only high-wear components. "Before a machine goes back to be rebuilt by a manufacturer," Dale says, "I have to be convinced it needs a rebuild."

Edgar has high praise for RailWorks mechanics, who exercise these judgments and who "work long hours in nasty weather, hot or cold. They're like the mail carrier: sleet, snow, heat, wind – nothing will stop them. What a great group. They make a great contribution."

## At Work Across North America



Carl Preston is one of three mechanics on site at RailWorks Track Systems' South Region hub office, located in Deer Park, TX. Carl typically works on backhoes, loaders and hydraulic tools, among others. Here, he repairs a hydraulic thumb cylinder for a backhoe that is part of Deer Park's 300-vehicle fleet.



Heavy-Equipment Mechanic Cecil Boone works on a chemical plugger being used by a gauging gang for CN on the Soo Subdivision at Batchawana Siding near Wawa in northern Ontario. Cecil is one of 14 PNR RailWorks mechanics.



Mechanic Harry Stonebarger in the St. Louis Area office in Bridgeton, MO, inspects a Huddig 1260 backhoe that RailWorks Track Services has been using to install concrete ties for St. Louis' MetroLink light rail system. Harry was preparing the backhoe prior to transit for use at another work site.



Mechanic Pat Wall stands beside a new engine he had installed earlier on the frame of a Jackson 2400 tamper. The 13-year RailWorks employee works out of the Central Region office in Lakeville, MN.

## RAILWORKSMART RAILWORKSAFE

# Goodbye, Near Miss. Hello, Good Catch.

RailWorks is saying goodbye to near-miss reporting.

Sort of.

The point of near-miss reporting in a company safety program is to share and study what almost happened but did not, with the goal of preventing a repeat scenario. Sometimes, there may be reluctance to reveal near misses. RailWorks safety personnel believe this could be occurring at RailWorks, just as it does with other companies.

“I think one of the things most every company fights when it comes to near-miss reporting is the stigma that is often attached to a near miss,” says Regional Safety Director Mike Lane. “A near miss, by definition, is

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**Mike Lane**  
Regional Safety Director

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an event which could have caused harm or damage under slightly different circumstances. That event is often viewed as a mistake or screw-up in the field, and the crew feels lucky to have gotten away without harm or damage.”

To stamp out any stigma and encourage more reporting of these events, RailWorks has decided to abandon the expression “near-miss” in favor of the term “good catch.” As Corporate Safety, Health and Environmental Directory Tammy Mathews says, “A near miss really is a good catch.”

In a recent blog post on the Safety Department SharePoint page, Tammy emphasized the value in reporting close calls “and taking the time to find out what really did happen rather than just moving on quickly. If we find out what went wrong, we can put a measure in place to prevent it from happening again. That’s what near misses are all about. It’s not about looking for blame. . . . We want to focus on the value of what we learn from errors, rather than blaming the person who made an error. We are all human.”

The Safety team will continue to study good catches to look for patterns to address, and to make this even easier, good catches now are prominent in their own online report to highlight issues averted or prevented.

The former system put good catches into the Near Miss category of a 24-hour incident report, but a stand-alone Good Catch report means intentional good catches – such as defective riggings pulled out of service after inspections or stopping work to secure proper track protection for a work group – will be singled out. “Actions in which the crews did everything correctly, and actually prevented potential serious incidents, will no longer be placed in the same category as the crew that almost backs a truck into something because they didn’t use a spotter but happened to get lucky,” Mike says.

The Good Catch Report is now part of the Safety Management page on SharePoint.

## Calendar Notes

### Industry and Recruiting Events

September 29	Michigan Tech Fall Recruiting Fair	Houghton, MI
October 4-7	Railway Interchange 2015	Minneapolis, MN

### Safety Training

October 20-22	RailWorks Annual Safety Summit	Chicago, IL
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## News Across the Line

### RailWorks Maintenance of Way

Welding crews are out in force in Chicago, where RailWorks has six teams dedicated to performing field welding services: three on BNSF Railway and three on the CN Railway. **Karl Boddy**, director of welding operations, said RailWorks crews are versatile, with the training and experience to perform both thermite and electric welding services on busy Class I rail lines with active train operations. Thermite welding crews specialize in removing joints and rail defects from track while assuring the targeted track laying temperature is maintained through de-stressing all areas worked in the track. These crews also are trained to install rail. Combination crews, which perform both thermite and electric welding services, also have the ability to do electric welding repairs on special track components, such as frogs, diamonds, expansion joints, switch points, rail defects and rail ends.



Helper Eric Balsler performs electric welding to repair a frog on BNSF Railway's main line in Naperville, IL, while Welding Supervisor Kris Hyder looks on and provides additional lookout protection for train traffic on adjacent tracks.

### RailWorks Track Systems

A West-region based production gang has been hard at work since mid-August upgrading Genesee & Wyoming's Central Oregon & Pacific Railroad (CORP), which operates over 389 miles of main line between Eugene, OR, and Weed, CA. Crews are changing out 42,000 cross ties, replacing 48,000 linear feet of rail and surfacing about 60 miles of track. The upgrades will bring the line up to Class II standards to handle new business growth, primarily lumber, along the line. Their work continues into October. This team, led by Project Manager **Mark Hornby** and Track Supervisor **Jammie Radmer**, worked earlier this summer on BNSF's main line near Butte, MT. Later this year they move on to the Eastern Washington Gateway Railway west of Spokane, WA, owned by the Washington State Department of Transportation.

See more of our work on CORP on the cover of this issue of *RailWorks Today* and in a couple of videos posted for employees on SharePoint, including one from on top of a tie crane shot with a GoPro camera.



A production gang working to rehabilitate the Central Oregon & Pacific Railroad (CORP) posed briefly for an early morning team photo and then quickly got on their way. While working amid beautiful surroundings and wildlife in southern Oregon and Northern California, they've also confronted some sweltering temperatures and dodged a few rattlesnakes.



## News Across the Line

### RailWorks Track Systems

#### RailWorks Maintenance of Way

RailWorks Track Systems Southeast Region is the prime contractor on a project to rehabilitate a portion of the North Louisiana & Arkansas Railroad line in southeast Arkansas and northeast Louisiana. The SEAEDD segment of the line extends from Lake Village south to Lake Providence, LA. It is undergoing rehabilitation as part of federally funded restoration of the area, damaged by two major 2011 storms and resultant flooding of the nearby Mississippi river. RailWorks has a track crew from the South Region office (supervisor is **Jason Smith**); a tie gang from RailWorks Maintenance-of-Way (supervisor is **Jeremy Hopkins**); two bridge crews from the South-

east Region (supervisors are **Scott Lowery** and **Ken Parkus**) and a track crew also from the Southeast (supervisor is **Mike Rhoden**). Project Engineer **John Phares** is handling onsite coordination of tie gangs, surfacing gangs and bridge crews. RailWorks Track Systems is replacing 44,000 ties, replacing culverts surfacing the 41 miles of SEAEDD track and rehabilitating bridges. The bridge division has made two, eight-day trips to the area to frame bents and change out piles, stringers and caps on five bridges as well as remove drift wood and debris from beneath the bridges. Work under the current contract should wrap up by the end of the year.

### RailWorks Signals & Communications

RailWorks is installing signal systems for a new BNSF Railway siding on its northern transcontinental line that will give the Arthur Companies access for their new grain silos in the Pillsbury, ND, area. So far, crews have installed two electric lock cases, a pair of

signal houses and underground cabling. After some civil work is completed, RailWorks will continue its installation with four more signals and a dozen additional concrete pads for propane tanks. Project Engineers are **Tom Johnson** and **David Chandler**. The project should wrap up near the end of October.



At left, employees working near Pillsbury, ND, have built forms and are finishing the concrete pads for four large propane tanks that will fuel heaters for a switch on BNSF Railway track. A cement truck driver watches RailWorks' Crewman Craig Knowles (front left) and Foreman Derrick Stratton. Behind them are Crewmen Anthony Akel (left) and Brandon Hawkings. In the photo at right, that same crew used a tag line to position a ground wayside signal onto its foundation, after which they finished the installation by bolting the signal to the foundation. Tom Johnson is operating an all-terrain lift.