

FILE NAME: National Safety Council (NSC)

DATE: 1952

DOC#: NSC206

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: General Sessions - 40th NSC - Index to Transactions of all Sessions

GENERAL SESSIONS

40th National Safety Congress

(Index to Transactions of all Sessions)

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RAILROAD INDUSTRY

as presented in sessions of the Railroad Section
at the 40th National Safety Congress

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Current Safety Topics in the Railroad Industry

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dustrialized territories has been in short supply for many years and we have been so anxious to fill our rosters that we have hired anyone who asked for a job without very much regard for his physical condition and none whatever for his mental. The result has been we now have men in our employ who are totally unfitted, mentally or physically, or both, for the work they were hired to do. Their attitude toward their employment is one of complete indifference. This is a most difficult thing to combat and particularly so because discipline on the railroads, as well as everywhere else, is non-existent. It is no easy task to persuade men of the type I have described to go along with management on any type of a program.

Unfortunately, the majority of them are working and have acquired seniority in the most hazardous occupations and at the highest wage rates. I am referring particularly to switchmen. On a railroad such as the EJ&E where switching operations are on a huge scale and performed in congested territories the problem is of considerable magnitude. We have been working on it through the usual procedures—safety meetings—posters—literature of various kinds—stressing of safety in our employees' magazine, safety contests, president's cup contests, etc. For the past several years we have given away Savings Bonds.

All of these things do some good undoubtedly, but we still haven't reached the man who is giving us most of the trouble—the unthinking man does not come to safety meetings, the unthinking man never reads the safety bulletins nor the employees' magazine—the unthinking man will not participate in any contest that requires any exertion on his part. He's just out there making the day and if he can do it without too much pain he would rather make the day at home on the claim agent's payroll. It is not my nature to be pessimistic, but I don't believe we'll ever get this fellow on the right side and we must, in the future, so far as we are able, avoid hiring him. If he is already in our employ—we must get rid of him.

On the EJ&E in our efforts to keep safety in first place, we have tightened our employment specifications and are subjecting the applicant to as severe a screening as we know how to give. We have made our

physical standards more severe and are x-raying applicants for work as switchmen or brakemen. Of course this system does not come anywhere near accomplishing all of the results we are looking for. It is expensive and while we are very probably getting better physical specimens—who can tell about the mentality and the work attitude of the applicants? If we rigidly adhere to these employment practices it may not be possible, at all times, to obtain sufficient help, but we believe it would be better to tie up some of our crews rather than have the jobs manned by men who are—to use the old expression "walking hazards of accidents."

With regard to the unthinking man who has already acquired seniority with us and who has been given every opportunity and a fair chance to mend his ways—if he does not—we have decided to get rid of him. This is a delicate operation. Even so—if we honestly want to make America's railroads a safe place to work—to ride and to ship—it must be done.

The matter of the consumption of intoxicating liquors—both on and off duty—has assumed enormous proportions. It would probably astound us if we could know definitely how many personal injuries are due directly to drinking. It would be even more astounding, I am sure, if we could ascertain how many of our employees, particularly on the afternoon and night shifts, come to work with their faculties dulled by the consumption of alcohol. Possibly it can't be said that these people are drunk, but it is a well known fact, all things being equal, a person who has had but one drink is not as bright and alert as a total abstainer. Alcohol, of course, does not affect everyone in the same degree, but it is safe to say even one drink has some effect on everyone.

There is no question but that the use of alcohol—slows reactions, impairs judgment, reduces resistance and exaggerates weakness.

And the worst of these—from our point of view—is the impairment of judgment. The drunk or the half drunk—or the fellow who has had "only a couple," thinks he is much brighter, more alert and more agile than he really is under the best of circumstances and naturally he takes more chances.

Every man who is responsible for the lives and safety of others (and this applies to virtually every railroad employee in the

so-called rural areas who have been in the mechanical departments (condition of structure) sh of liquor. On Rule "G" like days is more its observance

I believe in drinking hazard employee it employer, but to refuse to work in condition just as he would be an unsafe tool or just another employee. Results may be such a program will eventually

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Our first known the EJ&E case when one of our men at Gary, Indiana, had a skin infection dermatitis. In other minor cases properties and cause and cure. canvassed for reported minor suggested remedy coming.

The EJ&E has been working on measures of prevention for years we have been on all over the information on dermatitis, and we have exact answers, on the right road

Investigation of our dermatitis

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who is responsible for the safety of others (and this applies to every railroad employee in the

so-called running trades, as well as operators who handle train orders and employees in the mechanical and maintenance of way departments who are responsible for the condition of rolling equipment and track structure) should absolutely forego the use of liquor. Our own rules forbid its use, but Rule "G" like so many other fine rules these days is more honored in its breach than in its observance.

I believe our best chance of licking this drinking hazard is to convince the sober employee it is not only his duty to his employer, but to himself and his family to refuse to work with any one who is not in condition to properly perform his duties just as he would refuse to work with an unsafe tool or piece of equipment. It is just another educational program, and while results may seem slow in coming I believe such a program, intensively carried out, will eventually bear fruit.

Within the past few years, those railroads changing from steam to diesel power have found a new cause for alarm in the occupational disease field which is another barrier to safety in first place: It is commonly known as oil, or contact dermatitis. This type of skin infection has developed from a change in the chemical and physical properties of the oils, greases and lubricants required in diesel operation.

Our first knowledge of this trouble on the E.J. & E. came in the summer of 1947 when one of our electricians in the shops at Gary, Indiana, reported a severe case of skin infection which was diagnosed as oil dermatitis. Investigation developed several other minor cases of skin irritation on our properties and we began to try to find the cause and cure. Many other railroads were canvassed for information and while some reported minor cases of skin infection, no suggested remedial measures were forthcoming.

The E.J. & E. became probably the first railroad to evaluate this trouble and institute measures of prevention. In the last four years we have had many inquiries from railroads all over the USA and Canada for information on how to prevent contact dermatitis, and while we may not have the exact answers, we definitely believe we are on the right road.

Investigation in 1947 developed that most of our dermatitis cases originated in our

round houses where many of our employees handling petroleum products did not take the proper cleansing precautions after such contact. Our medical staff proposed certain instructions, additional cleansing facilities and the use of an industrial liquid cleanser and scrubber in all shop washrooms. These suggestions were followed and in addition, lectures and pamphlets were given to those employees coming in contact with petroleum products. Supervisory forces are required to keep a constant supervision to see that these instructions are followed and as a consequence our dermatitis incidence is now extremely low.

The real cause of dermatitis is primarily an individual failure to use the proper cleansing methods after coming in contact with petroleum products—and the unnecessary contact with such products.

Many people believe that oil is just oil but that is not entirely true. Any oil is greasy and readily spreads over and penetrates the surface it contacts, but it is the chemical and physical properties of oils that make them distinctive.

Lube oil for diesel units must reduce friction in the presence of high pressure, speed, heat and wear and to stand up under these conditions must undergo a process of polymerization. This process requires the use of heavy metals such as phosphorus, calcium, zinc magnesium, barium bismuth, tin and others and these leave traces in the finished product. *All heavy metals are toxic to humans if the contact is great enough.* Diesel fuel is a straight distillate product and still contains much of the impurities of the crude oil, of which sulphur is the most irritating, and its dye from which it derives its distinctive odor is a coal derivative and may irritate the skin.

We will have these problems in dieselization, for we cannot revolutionize the petroleum industry. We can, however, learn to live with them and we must, therefore, pattern our procedure on sound reasonable grounds. It is the responsibility of management to provide recognized protective measures for employees to use and competent advice on how to use them.

The claim department and the medical department can be of the greatest help in making safety first. The claim department must investigate each claim—no matter how small, just as thoroughly as a claim involv-

ing many thousands of dollars. Every time a claim, which is not justly due, is paid, the gates are opened for an avalanche of similar claims and the standing of your claim department with the men is weakened. Just as in any other phase of railroad operation the men involved will appreciate and admire a firm, but fair, attitude and will despise and take advantage of a weak, vacillating one.

I do not believe the safety program gets the support it should from the company doctor. My remarks are based on my own experience with certain company doctors and not on any vast knowledge I claim to have about the ethics of the profession as a whole. I think he is too inclined to rely on what the patient tells him rather than on his own observation and study of the case. I think he is too hesitant, for fear maybe of complications, to give the employee a work slip and he too readily accedes to the patient's suggestion that he should take another day or another week off. I have no quarrel with these actions when they are dictated by the doctor's best judgment. It is only when I have cause to believe that he has not studied the case sufficiently to be able to form an opinion or when I think he

is playing politics with the patient that I complain.

I know of no cure for these things. There is no easy way to obtain our objective. I know of nothing new, and indeed probably nothing new is needed. Maybe all we need is to re-state the objective and take a new look at the means for attaining it.

We are all prone to accept the theory that the employee is a full grown man and should know how to take care of himself or he has been around as long as we have and should know better. This kind of thinking on the part of supervisors must stop if we are going to keep safety in first place. Proper instruction to employees in both work and safety habits must be paramount.

We must sell employees the idea that safety is their *personal responsibility*. No one can be safe for them. If an employee is hurt, he is the one that goes to the hospital. If safety is to be in first place on our railroads, our educational program must be constant, intensive, interesting and enthusiastic, and above all it must be honestly believed in and administered by top management. Lip service has no place in a safety program.

Report of Trespassing Committee

By W. H. ROBERTS, Chairman
Supt. of Safety, Chicago and North Western Railway Co., Chicago

Trespassing on railroad property has been the concern of railroad people since the invention of the steam locomotive.

For example, during the 12 year period from 1840 to 1852, 306 trespassers were killed while standing on the tracks of English railroads.

Again we find that in the state of Massachusetts, during the nine year period from 1846 to 1854—100 years ago—164 people were run over while walking on or lying on the track.

In a book, written in 1856, almost 100 years ago, a civil engineer named Emile Withe, on *Railroad Accidents—Their Causes and Means of Preventing Them*, asks the question—"What preventive means can be devised for persons who walk carelessly upon the track; for those who sleep on the

rails." So they had the trespassing problem 100 years ago.

50 years ago we were averaging 500 trespasser fatalities annually.

In 1906 Ralph Richards, General Claim Agent of the Chicago and North Western Railway, wrote a book entitled *Railroad Accidents—Their Cause and Prevention*, and in it he refers to the 5,105 trespassers killed on American railroads during the year 1904, and goes on to state that "As the traffic and population increase, cases of this kind grow in number, and, for some unknown reason, the public think that, while they must keep off the property of private individuals, where there is no danger, they are privileged to go onto a railroad track where everyone knows there is great danger, and after doing so a few times, the courts

say they must look out for themselves and get hurt."

The first prevention distributed by the American Railway Congress—at Council for speaker reference to trespassing time the rail North West produced by the third po

We still have us. Trespass second only grade crossing.

Down through and safety in problem the some roads in in their promote able measure

Evidence of fact that during fatalities and roads was low for more than 1,091 fatalities under what it was under twenty under forty-five fatalities were

It is particularly decrease in fatalities 14 years of age have had a dozen killed while the past decade was 68, a decrease previous year.

We have a decrease in youths 14 to 20 last year, compared with the year, and the except one, for

A corresponding fatalities to accidents item stands out is the matter of tramps. For increase in fatalities, passers, until we

SECTION

NCIL 1952-53

and St. Louis Railroad,

Western Railroad Company,

Co., Chicago, Ill.

ean), Duluth, Missabe and
FORD (Vice-Chairman).
MBALL, Southern Railway

Western Railway Company.
Pacific Railroad Company.
Railway Co., Richmond,
Washington, D. C.; E. J.

n), Canadian Pacific Ry.
rk Central System, New
Western Railroad Company,
Chicago, Ill.; J. T. WIL-
GODFREY, Erie Rail-

man), Southern Railway
n), Baltimore and Ohio
Railway, St. Paul, Minn.;
o., Chicago, Ill.; *R. P.
St. Louis, Mo.; *D. E.
E. SLAVEN, Chicago.
RTH, Canadian Na-
nsylvania Railroad,
Railway Lines, Tyler,
Va.

York Central System,

go and North Western
n), The River Terminal
go, Milwaukee, St. Paul
R, The Chicago, South
J. R. TALBOTT, JR.,
Richmond, Va.; W. C.
Albany, N. Y.; P. H.
dif.

man), St. Louis South-
Chairman), The Dela-

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*Past General Chairman