

Safety—Its Application to the Individual

By D. F. STEVENS

General Superintendent of Transportation, Baltimore & Ohio Railroad

The speaker said in part: The experience gathered from 25 years of railroad work has enabled me to classify the railroad worker in his relation to safety into three classes. In the first class I might place the employee who is inherently safe under any condition of routine service; second, the employee who has convinced himself that safety is a fine thing for every one else, but that he himself does not need it; and third, the employee whose attitude is almost openly antagonistic and who is generally a fatalist.

Men who may be classified as safe under any condition of routine service are usually characterized by loyalty, dependability and stability. I would say their home lives are usually such that they do not carry with them to their work any mental conditions that might aggravate or disturb them as they perform their duties, and as a result they can think clearly. They are the people who do not become easily excited; because their nerves are in good shape, and they are able to face any situation that normally arises with clear thinking. I believe that 90 per cent of the railroad people come under this classification.

The second class, those who feel that the safety work is for others but that they themselves do not need it, seem to me to constitute the biggest problem we have. They have about convinced themselves that they are superior to anything occurring to them, and refuse to give safety much thought. Generally speaking, employees of this class are unable to distinguish between the things that are safe and the things that are not safe. I have noticed one thing that is generally common with all. Their views on safety are on a parity with their views of other things. They seem to get alone all right until something happens and then they are usually helpless.

This class of worker can only be converted by the untiring constant efforts of those who supervise his activities. Perhaps as an instrument to aid the safety campaigner can use the other members of the crews or gangs with whom they work, to constantly keep driving at them and break down their resistance to unsafe practices. These employees must be educated to differentiate between the safe and the unsafe.

Then we come to the third class, whom I have mentally classified as the fatalists or antagonistic to safety measures. These people constitute a problem all to itself, and in dealing with them there are only two avenues open, namely, intensive and persistent training, or dismissal. I have not yet convinced myself that any large percentage of them are susceptible at all to the first cure, and I have censored myself from time to time for not having dismissed more employees of this type, because in a number of cases I have later come to see them killed or injured in the service, due solely to their own actions. Of course, the thing that is still worse about this type of person is that because of his actions he not only subjects himself to the possibility of injury or death, but involves others as well.

I seem to see in this class of people certain distinguishing characteristics. Generally the man not only sees red in relation to safety matters, but his thoughts are along the same line in other matters. Frequently he is a nervous, fretful individual, with in many cases not a good home condition, and in most cases with his private habits not any too good.

With perhaps very few exceptions, the safety question finds ready response from the employee company, the labor organization to which the man belongs, his family, his friends, and generally speaking, himself, if you are able to reach him through the particular channel that appeals to him. In the final analysis, the success of these measures depends upon the force and sincerity of purpose that the supervising officer puts into the work. It is worse than useless for a foreman to talk safety to his gang, if they can see that he is daily doing things that are unsafe himself.

WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION

October 5, 1932

Report of Committee on Train Service Accidents

By D. G. PHILLIPS

Superintendent of Safety, The Wabash Railway

The speaker said in part: In the year 1931, out of 5,099 fatalities and 35,656 persons injured, according to reports to the Interstate Commerce Commission, 4,624 of these fatalities and 18,849 of the persons injured occurred in train service accidents. While it is true that a large proportion of these fatalities occurred in grade crossing accidents and to trespassers, it is also true that over half of the fatalities to employees on duty occurred in what is known as train service accidents and about one-third of the injuries to employees occurred in train service accidents.

We feel, therefore, that we are justified in saying that the prevention of train service accidents is probably the most important safety problem confronting us today, as far as accidents in and around railroads are concerned.

Under the heading "coupling or uncoupling cars or locomotives" in 1931 12 persons were killed and 394 persons injured. This may be compared for the year 1930, when 30 persons were killed and 604 injured. The year 1931, therefore, shows a decrease of 60 per cent in the number of fatalities and 35 per cent in the number of personal injuries; and these may be compared further with the record for 1920, when there were 151 fatalities and 2,450 injuries due to this cause.

The principal reason for personal injuries under this heading is due to employees stepping in between moving cars, usually at a time when coupling is about to be made, to determine if the knuckle has fully opened, to adjust location of couplers, or to adjust the coupling or uncoupling lever, with the result that they are caught between the couplers; or perhaps due to tripping or falling while performing this act, and are thus run over by the car. Our remedy for correcting this dangerous practice is for each and every railroad to make a positive and definite rule prohibiting employees from going between moving cars when nearing each other, to examine the employees to see that the rule is understood by them, and that supervisory officers see that the rule is enforced.

Under the heading "coupling or uncoupling air or steam hose," in 1931, 13 persons were killed and 175 persons injured, which may be compared with the record for 1930, when 7 persons were killed and 232 injured. The increase of 86 per cent in the number of fatalities is decidedly regrettable, although the record shows a decrease of 24 per cent in the number of injuries. The principal cause of employee injuries under this head is due to their failure to protect themselves by performing this work in accordance with the rules.

The remedy for this class of accidents where car men are employed rests in a full and complete enforcement of the blue signal rule which is quite uniform on all railroads. Railroad managements should improve this blue signal so as to make it as efficient as possible. The rule should also govern the placing of the blue signal so as to make sure that it is in a location where it will serve the best purpose as a signal to warn train, engine and yard men who might be guided by it. Where engine is coupled onto cars and trainmen are performing this work without blue signal protection, they should not permit themselves to get into a place where an unexpected movement of the cars might cause an accident, without first notifying the engine man and fireman so as to be fully protected.

Under the heading "operating hand brakes," in 1931 there were 18 fatalities and 824 persons injured, as compared with the record for 1930 when 26 persons were killed and 1,154 injured. The year 1931 shows a decrease of 31 per cent in