

Summary of Rail Topic Group Conference Call Friday, March 26, 1999 11:30 a.m-12:30 p.m.

Participants on the call included:

Kevin Blackwell, FRA	Mike Butler, UETC
Sandy Covi, UPRR	Bob Fronczak, AAR
Daren Gilbert, State of Nevada	Swenam Lee, DOE-FETC
William Naughton, ComEd	

The call consisted of summary discussion of version #2 of the topic group's "TEC/WG Transportation Safety Rail Comparison" and additional discussion of comments submitted by Dr. Swenam Lee (DOE-FETC) and Mr. Steve Hamp (NTP-Albuquerque).

In general, group participants felt that the edited version of the paper did a good job of meeting the objectives agreed upon by the group. Mr. Butler asked that participants refrain from discussion of minor editorial changes and instead submit such changes directly to him. Mr. Gilbert raised the subject of the paper's title and asked if perhaps it could be re-worked to better reflect the purpose and scope of the paper. Other participants agreed with this assessment. An interim solution was discussed; this was to add the following phrase as a subtitle beneath the current title: "A Framework for Comparing Rail Issues to Issues Raised in the WIPP Planning and Implementation Guide." Mr. Butler noted that additional suggestions related to the title, should they arise, could be sent to him directly.

Additional discussion was raised within the group pertaining to the reference in Section 6 to the Medical Training Issues topic group. Participants felt that this reference might prove confusing if that topic group were to disband, or if a reader was not familiar with that group's existence or focus. Participants decided to re-work this reference to apply not to the formal topic group, but to "radiological and emergency response experts and medical instructors." Also, in Section 10, "Training and Exercises", it was suggested by Mr. Naughton that the paper not use the term "advocates" as concerns compliance with industry standards. He felt that such a term deviated from the general focus of the paper on documentation rather than recommendation. Participants agreed with this comment; Mr. Butler noted that he would revise this sentence.

The group next turned to comments submitted to Mr. Butler by Dr. Lee on March 9, 1999. Among Dr. Lee's substantive comments was the suggestion that rail inspections would automatically interfere with normal traffic flow; hence statements that such inspections should not impede with the flow of interstate commerce seemed to overly reflect the industry position. Mr. Fronczak and Ms. Covi explained to Dr. Lee that what the group meant by not impeding the "normal" flow of traffic was that inspections should not occur at distinct checkpoints setup by states for the sole purpose of said inspection, but rather should be carried out in rail yards or at normal crew change points whenever possible. Mr. Fronczak noted that this was not only the most economically viable, but also the safest method for inspection, since there were not always safe places for stopping the train at state borders or at other places along the route. Dr. Lee was

satisfied with this clarification. In reference to another comment he had concerning the development of a "checklist" for locating a rail car in event of an incident, Mr. Blackwell and others remarked that such criteria for locating a rail car or cars did exist, but varied depending on the type of incident involved. The group felt that trying to describe the variety of factors that could impact location decisions would involve a level of specificity too great for this paper. Dr. Lee agreed with this characterization by the group, remarking that he had not had a full grasp of the purpose and focus of the paper when he initially submitted these comments.

The final topic addressed on the call was the set of comments submitted by Steve Hamp, DOE-Albuquerque, on March 24, 1999. Mr. Hamp's first comment was that Section 1, "High Quality Crews and Carrier Compliance," only discussed qualifications and training of train crews, and not the other two main aspects of compliance, adherence to regulations and safety/performance provisions. The group agreed that some general mention of these two compliance activities should be made; in regards to regulatory adherence, the topic group's matrices should be referenced, and some discussion of the existence of performance provisions in contract vehicles should also be added. Mr. Butler said that he would revise this section accordingly. The group felt that Mr. Hamp's second comment, concerning the focus and application of railroad contingency plans, might require too much specific discussion about the variety of plans that exist for each railroad and the multitude of factors that impact them. Mr. Fronczak, Ms. Covi, and others suggested a general discussion of how such plans were deployed—through regional operations centers—and explanation that the plans feature a general concept and approach for all regions and freight, but are also tailored to local and freight-specific conditions. Mr. Hamp's third comment suggested a summary of how a rail dispatch center functions; participants noted that each railroad has a centralized operations center that consists of regional or territory-specific units with personnel expressly devoted to operations within these regional units. However, participants felt that additional description might be too operationally focused and would get away from the paper's role as a summary document.

Mr. Butler closed by thanking participants for their 2+ years of work on the group, and noted that the topic group would be disbanded upon finalization of this paper as it had no pending issues to address. He said that he would circulate a third (and final) version of the paper, which would incorporate the discussion on this call and other editorial comments, by e-mail sometime within the next month. This version would then be presented to the larger TEC/WG at the July meeting in Philadelphia.