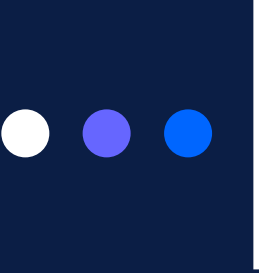




A Report on the Operating Practices RSAC Working Group's

Fort Worth, Texas meeting
On September 27th and 28th 2007



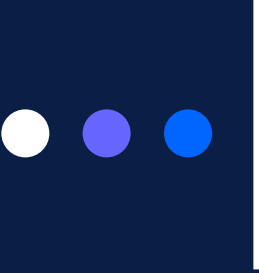
FRA's Office of Research & Development provided Presentations on:

- Where/How the R&D human factor's program fits into FRA
- Human systems integration for railroad applications
- Organizational culture and safety performance.....subtitled:
- Overview of results to date from 3 related evaluations



Continued...

- The evaluation programs include:
 - Clear signal for action
 - Confidential close call reporting system
 - Investigation of safety related occurrences protocol and the last presentation called:
- From evaluation capacity to improved safety and productivity.
- These presentations may be viewed in their entirety by going to the ROR WG website.



HRX Warning System Safety- Operating Issues

- There are more than 500 activation failures reported each year although few result in an impact accident
- Other actions by railroad personnel present risks to the public



Continued...

- Activation failure is defined as:
 - The failure of a highway-rail grade crossing active warning system to indicate the approach of a train at least 20 seconds prior to the train's arrival at the crossing, or indicate it's occupancy of the crossing. (This failure indicated to a highway user that it is safe to proceed across the crossing, when in fact, it is not safe to do so.)



Continued...

- FRA has traditionally classified an activation failure to be related to the failure of, or interference with a component of the crossing warning system, e.g., defective flashing lights or train detection apparatus, misapplied jumper wires, loss of power, etc.



Continued...

- However, the ROR WG was asked:
 - “Should operating circumstances that result in insufficient or no warning also be required to be reported to FRA?”
- What enforcement action should FRA pursue when failure to comply with operating rules or special instructions related to HRX occur?



Continued...

- Examples of non-activation failure (although a lot less than the 20 second requirement) included:
 - Shunting a track $>150\text{ft}$ from a HRX
 - Fonda, NY
 - Pompano, FL
 - Excessive speed
 - Stopping in approach to a HRX then moving towards HRX too quickly



Continued...

- Lots of discussion on these points ensued.
 - Retire active warning devices and install passive devices on branch lines
 - What is ‘undue delay’ regarding repair of active warning devices?
 - The term is subjective depending upon ones’ viewpoint
- FRA asks for feedback on how we should approach HRX activation issues that are not currently reportable



Continued...

- May need a larger database to determine the best course of action
- Maybe the Close Call Reporting System will help the ROR WG decide what it needs to do in this area
- Improve the forms?
- Continuing 225 issues



Unresolved NTSB Recommendations

- Wireless communications
- After arrival of... orders
- Calling signals



Wireless Communication

- NTSB is concerned with the effects of wireless communication use on situational awareness
- Variety of concerns related to limiting cell phone use
- General agreement with NTSB concern



Continued...

- Railroad Operating Rules meeting in November
 - Group will discuss the possibility of some level of standardized use
 - FRA will attend and will facilitate promulgation of a Best Practices S.O.P.
 - ROR WG will discuss their findings in January at the next meeting



“After arrival of...” orders

- NTSB recommends FRA prohibit “After arrival of...” orders
- Several railroads still use this type of order. Some use it extensively and,
- Most have specific procedures for it’s use
- Labor is opposed to it’s use



Continued...

- FRA provided guidance/suggested procedures for “after arrival of...” orders shortly after the Smithfield, WV collision in a Safety Bulletin dated 12-3-96
- But Clarendon, TX; Gunter, TX and recently at Bergman, AR have convinced FRA that standardizing procedures at meeting or waiting points is appropriate



Continued...

- FRA will bring a draft rule using Best Practices from various sources to the January '08 ROR WG meeting for further discussion



Calling Signals

- NTSB recommended that FRA require railroads to call all signals over radio
- Extended discussion about what various railroads now require of their crews
- Labor commented about the problems inherent with this recommendation as it applies to passenger train conductors



Continued...

- Most present expressed concerns about excessive radio use and the problems that it could entail
- NTSB representative suggested that locomotive engineer alertness, particularly when alone in the cab, was more the concern rather than keeping the conductor involved



Continued...

- Some railroads have operating rules that address NTSB's concern regarding engineer alertness issues and some don't
- ROR WG will look at a couple of these rules that address NTSB's concerns at the next meeting



Way Ahead...

- Next meeting of the ROR WG is scheduled for:
- January 17 & 18, 2008 beginning at 9:00
- The meeting will be at the NTSB Conference Room—Washington, D.C.