

## Why Take a Chance?



*Larry Rehmer/Livingston Mechanical Dept.*

Have you ever made a decision to break a safety rule? How long did it take for you to reach that decision? It only takes a moment to decide to break that rule and take a chance that could change your life forever. Think about your personal commitment to safety behavior, both on and off the job, and what you can do to keep that commitment strong.

Do you always work safely? Are you 100% committed to the safety of yourself, your coworkers, friends, and family? Is your commitment as strong as it should be? Are you taking risks and getting away with it? Don't expect your luck to hold. No one ever plans an accident. No one wakes up in the morning and drives to work thinking, "I will have an accident today, so I'd better buckle up." No one ever climbs to the very top of a ladder and knows for sure they won't fall. Having a personal commitment to safety is a commitment to do the right things to prevent an accident or minimize the damage done in case an accident does occur. What is gained by taking a chance? Have you ever bypassed lockout-tagout procedures? Have you ever driven a car after you had too much to drink? Have you failed to use fall-protection equipment because it was just too much trouble? What did you gain in that situation; a minute of time, an ounce of convenience? Now ask yourself if those gains were worth it. Is a little bit of time or convenience really worth chancing electrocution, a car accident, or a bad fall? Don't sacrifice your future by taking a chance. Every time you're tempted to take a chance with your safety ask yourself if it's really worth the risk. Your loved ones will thank you for making the right decision.

Keeping a strong commitment to safety is not easy. Does peer pressure interfere with your commitment? Do your peers think it's silly to take time for safety? You can take a stand and set an example. By committing to safety 100% of the time, you can help reverse the peer pressure that sometimes causes unsafe behavior. Someday you may find that the old peer pressure has given way to something new; the respect of your peers earned by setting a good example.

It's normal for your commitment to safety to fluctuate. Sometimes it's strong, other times it's weak. Unfortunately, it tends to be strong just after a close call or for a few days after you hear of an accident. Then the commitment wanes, only to be strengthened again by another tragedy. Recognizing this pattern can help you avoid it. Think about your work habits. Have there been times when you're more likely to take a risk? How about those times when you've been extra careful? Did the strength of your commitment depend on an outside event like another person being involved in an accident? You can keep your commitment strong by remembering the commitment is for you. If you allow things that happen to other people to determine the strength of your commitment, it is likely to fluctuate. You can always learn from things that happen to other people, but to keep your commitment strong all the time, stay focused on your personal safety and those things you do that affect it.

Programs, procedures, and rules depend on a strong personal commitment. Ask yourself where you are with your own safety attitude. Are you 100% committed 100% of the time? You are? Great! Need some improvement? Promise yourself to work on it, and keep that promise. Why take a chance?

## Ben Hampson ASLRRRA Safety Person of the Year

ASLRRRA recently announced that Ben Hampson, Livingston mechanical electrician and safety leader, has been selected as the 2008 Safety Person of the Year. To qualify for the ASLRRRA award, Ben was nominated as MRL's Safety Person of the Year, and he is also our nominee for the AAR 2007 Harold F. Hammond Safety Award.

Ben began his MRL career in 2004 and was asked to take the lead in becoming the "safety coordinator" for the Livingston Mechanical Department within his first year. Ben, already active in other Livingston programs to help his local community, eagerly accepted the challenge and jumped in with enthusiasm.

As an MRL Safety Committee member since 2004 and current vice-chairman, Ben champions the importance of each individual employee's attitude and duty to work safely. Attitude and commitment are the core values of Ben's safety message, and he delivers that message with confidence and positive results. His fundamental emphasis is to advance interaction between co-workers ensuring all are committed to accepting responsibility and accountability for their own safety and the safety of their colleagues.

All MRL employees (except Safety Department personnel) are eligible for



*Ben Hampson*

nomination by a co-worker for Montana Rail Link Safety Person of the Year. The search for candidates begins each year in December. Other MRL employees nominated this year include Dennis Besel, Tom Maurer, and Mike Rahl. In mid-February our Sr. Safety Council nominating committee, comprised of the President and Vice President Operations, along with the department heads, review each candidate's credentials, safety-committed initiatives, role in MRL safety programs, work performance, personal safety record, and community involvement.

The ASLRRRA award is selected from a pool of applicants submitted by ASLRRRA member railroads. The winner is chosen by a panel made up of representatives from railroads, labor, shippers, and suppliers.

Congratulations, Ben.....for continuing to exemplify a high standard of safety for Montana Rail Link!

## Preparing for Spring at Lightning Creek

*Jim Bieber*

As the weather begins to warm up, and we head into spring; most people think that last winter wasn't too bad. However, the sections in Thompson Falls and Clark Fork may disagree since weather conditions kept both sections very busy plowing snow and shoveling out switches and crossings. This work continued at all times of day and night to keep the trains moving. It could be considered a thankless job, but in reality we are all very grateful.

The Clark Fork area has seen the most snow, at 140% above the average. A record snow pack means a very good chance of record run off. The community of Clark Fork sits alongside the unpredictable Lightning Creek, one of the largest drainages in the state of Idaho. Lightning Creek has created issues with the two previous railroads, Northern Pacific and Burlington Northern. In fact, Montana Rail Link dredged the river

channel in 1989 in order to create more space between the bridge and river channel for bed loading and floating debris.

With the increasing probability of flooding this spring, MRL Engineering Department determined that the channel must, again, be dredged. The department then created a dialog with several governmental agencies in Idaho to attain the necessary permits for the project. After several weeks, all permits were granted, however the project had to be completed in a two week period, just before the illusive bull trout starting moving up the river to spawn. A contractor from the area was hired, and several pieces of equipment were brought in to accomplish the work. The river was first diverted to the east side of the channel, and in a period of five days, between 20,000 and 25,000 cubic yards of material were moved from within 100 feet upstream and 100 feet downstream of the bridge. Underneath the bridge, the channel, which before the project began had a minimum of 3 1/2 feet of free board (the distance between the bridge and the channel bottom), now has 16 feet of free board. Mission accomplished!

## Keeping Track

### On the Move

**Jay Hart** • Was ATM/Road Foreman, Now **Trainmaster/Road Foreman**

**Dan Johnson** • Was Manager Control Systems, Now **Communications Supervisor**

**Mark Smith** • Was Terminal Superintendent, Now **Assistant Superintendent Operations**

### Look Who's New

#### Field Engineer

**Nick Bailey**, *Previously Staff Engineer for the City of Billings*

#### Management Trainee

**Ryan Wake**, *Previously Lumber Product Manager with Boise Cascade in Vancouver*

### Retirements

**Tim Cole**, *Operating*  
**Gary Crear**, *Operating*  
**Larry Eddy**, *Mechanical*  
**David Goodson**, *Operating*  
**William Madsen**, *Engineering*  
**Gary Padilla**, *Mechanical*  
**Kenneth Stevenson**, *Engineering*

## DATES to Remember

### April 25th

**Comprehensive Health Screening - Livingston**

### May 5th

**Comprehensive Health Screening - Helena**

### June 21st

**MRL Missoula Golf Invitational**

### August 15th

**MRL Laurel Golf Invitational**

## Mechanical Department Conducts Audit

*Larry Minch, Mechanical Car Foreman*

The Mechanical Department conducted an audit of the Safety Action Plan for 2008 at Missoula, Helena, Livingston, and Laurel this month. Two mechanical supervisors, Larry Rehmer and Tom Burden, traversed the system to ascertain that all locations are on task with the implemented plan. They toured facilities, met with light duty employees, and attended safety meetings to furnish "another set of eyes" to the often-myopic, isolated shop and roundhouse work areas. "We sometimes do the same thing day-after-day without realizing there may be a better way, a newer tool, or a safer procedure to accomplish the task – we don't know until it is recognized! It is an ongoing learning curve everywhere for everyone", says Chief Mechanical Officer Claude Van Winkle.

He views this as a focus on training for MRL supervisors and employees alike. These audits will continue quarterly.

## Pay It Forward

*Erin Best*

The Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation created the *Pay It Forward* program that provided 220 giving cards in the amount of \$250 to Washington Companies' employees. These cards were given by employees to their favorite charity.

Over 100 MRL employees received giving cards; some of whom even chose to match the donation amount for a total individual donation of \$500. Card givers were asked to share the story of their charitable gift online, and the stories are still rolling in! Receiving charities were diverse; selected because the organization had touched the giver's life in some way or simply because the giver recognized a need. One donation story even involved a small rock. It seems a young Missoula boy has been selling rocks to raise money for the Missoula Food Bank. One MRL

employee heard about his efforts and met the boy at a local store to purchase \$250 in groceries for the Missoula Food Bank in exchange for one of those very special rocks.

Wrapping up at the end of the month, the *Pay It Forward* program has provided much-needed funds to organizations and individuals in need throughout Montana. At least \$2,000 was donated in the Livingston and Helena areas, \$9,000 in the Billings area, and over \$25,000 in the Missoula area. Thanks to those MRL employees who made this program a great success and truly helped pay it forward! With the success of this new program, we can be hopeful that an entirely different group of employees can share in this experience in the future.

Be sure to take time to view other *Pay It Forward* stories by visiting:  
[www.dpwfoundation.org/payitforward.shtml](http://www.dpwfoundation.org/payitforward.shtml).

## Billings Yard Chips in for Worthy Cause

*Robert Wallace, Billings Clerk*



*Pictured left to right: Sister Mary V. Maronick, Locomotive Engineer Terry Bankston, Clerk Edie Dibble, and Switchman Randy Harper.*

MRL Billings Yard employees Randy Harper, Terry Bankston and Edie Dibble recently presented Sister Mary V. Maronick of AIDSPIRIT Montana with both personal and *Pay It Forward* donations collected from Billings Yard staff.

AIDSPIRIT Montana helps children in Africa and Asia who have been orphaned when both parents succumbed to AIDS. The program, started in 1994 by Rev. Tom Beggin along with Montana families who had lost loved ones to AIDS, began by sponsoring children's school expenses. Currently, the program is headed by Sister Mary V. and Terry Fettig, who together have expanded the program to help dig wells, take care of children's medical needs, and supply them with LifeStraws. LifeStraws are special drinking straws that kill and remove 99.999% of waterborne bacteria and 98.7% of waterborne viruses, helping prevent diseases like typhoid, cholera, dysentery, and diarrhea.

Fettig has personally overseen much of the donation effort, traveling to distribute LifeStraws and supervise projects in Uganda, Kenya and, most recently, Cambodia. AIDSPIRIT Montana has contacts with local missionaries to ensure that donations go exclusively to the children who most need them. "This is so homegrown and effective and authentic," Sister Mary V. said. "It's helping these children."

## Annual Fund Raiser a Huge Success

*Lynda Frost*

A well-appreciated donation of \$28,000 was presented to The Flagship Program of Missoula for purchase of a highly-needed van. The donation was raised onboard The Money Train, an event held annually to raise funds for a different non-profit organization each year. This year's event was held in February and was, again, co-sponsored by Montana

Rail Link and the Missoula Sunrise Rotary Club. Over 130 Missoulians purchased tickets to ride from Missoula to Dixon (round trip) while participating in a raffle and silent auction – all proceeds of which was provided to The Flagship Program.

The Flagship Program is an after-school program that is located in ten of Missoula's schools and provides activities for more than 10,000 students. MRL and the Missoula Sunrise Rotary Club have proudly coordinated this event for the last seven years for youth-based organizations.

## Health Screenings

### Offered



*Erin Best*

The best step toward improving your health is understanding your body's condition. It is in this spirit that the Washington

Group of Companies, including MRL, are providing free screenings to employees and their spouses. Beginning

mid-March in Missoula and continuing in other locations through May, the comprehensive health screenings include a complete blood count and body mass index as well as tests of kidney and liver function, cholesterol, blood pressure, triglycerides, glucose, thyroid, and prostate (for men over 40). Test results will be mailed to the employee and a confidential follow-up is also available. Missoula's Health Screenings were in high demand with over 300 participating. If screenings haven't yet been held in your location, be sure your appointment has been scheduled. Call Lynda Frost at 523-1417 for further information. Here's to your health!