Hurricane Harvey impacts Texas Team Members

By Tracie VanBecelaere  
Managing Editor

It’s not often that an interview is interrupted because a snake is swimming through the waters near your interviewee, but that’s what members of our Team in the Houston, Texas, area are dealing with.

Snakes, filth laden waters, food shortages, and even looting are now part of the daily life of those who have been affected by the flooding caused by Hurricane Harvey.

Ron Jackson is a crew leader at the Houston TPC facility and was initially trapped at the location. While there, his family in Pearland, Texas, got notice that they would have to evacuate so his wife Irma, sons Brian, 17, and Justin, 24, grabbed what they could and fled the house. Ron was able to get back to his family through a series of truck rides and wading through chest deep water. They ended up at the home of Justin’s girlfriend’s family who graciously offered them refuge.

To make matters worse, Irma has a weakened immune system due to illness and not only are the germ filled waters a worry, getting the medication she needed was also a concern. Brenda Antle, Watco benefits specialist, put in a call to MedTrak to ensure that all Team Members could get the prescriptions they needed refilled.

Although the Jackson’s have been through so much already with still so many unknowns to be answered, one bright spot is seeing how their boys have reacted.

"The first thing they did was go out to see how they could help others. They volunteered at a local Chick-fil-A, putting together chicken sandwiches for first responders and shelters. And helping out at Kroger’s grocery. And while they’re helping others, they’re wearing wet shoes because that’s all they have,” said their mom Irma.

"People ask them what they need but Justin just said, ‘I feel like I need to help the community’. They just feel grateful for what they do have.”

The Jackson’s were finally able to get back to their house after being gone five days, while the water is receding, the damage left behind is devastating.

"I opened the oven and water poured out, it’s in the drawers of the refrigerator, there are so many places the water ends up that you don’t expect.”

The family is hoping to rent a recreational vehicle to park in their driveway and call home in the months it takes for the clean-up to be completed.

Macy Freeze is another Watco Team member who has experienced a loss due to the flooding. Macy is a supply chain coordinator for Watco Supply Chain Services International. She lost her car due to the flood waters but lucky in that her home was spared. One issue cause by flooding is the lack of supplies, Macy spent hours looking for milk for her two-year old and then paid triple the price for the gallon she did find.

"My step-daughter’s mother lost her house completely. We were able to get some of their clothes out before the water was too dangerous but other than that, they lost everything. When we were getting stuff out of the house, my step-daughters cat ran under the house on one of the beams with just inches between water and the bottom of the house! We tried to get to her but we couldn’t with the currents from the river and how fast the water was rising and knew she’d drown. The cat somehow got back in the house and we found her today, alive. That cat is her world.”

Macy and her fiancé and have been out on the boats and jet skis rescuing people and animals from the roofs of their homes. On Wednesday (August 30) they headed to a local nursing home where water was rushing in and over 130 elderly people that were wheelchair bound were sitting in water.

"We ended up changing them to dry clothes, changing diapers, checking vitals, smashing up their food, changing catheter bags, helping them go to the restroom, carrying them to the buses, etc. It kept us busy all day! We got them all loaded up and sent to a nearby shelter for a couple of days until they can be transferred to other nursing homes,” said Macy.

She added, "At this time, all I can say is that my family is alive and we are breathing. And for that, I’m grateful.”

Nandia Holmes is a Customer Service Representative at the terminal in Port Arthur, Texas. The single mother of three, is from Chicago and says she has never experienced anything like this in her life. She has been unable to locate her mother and is currently staying with a friend.

Nandia said, "I’m doing my best to remain strong for my children because I don’t want them to see me broken. I appreciate the support from my Watco family. This was an unexpected disaster and it’s changed many lives including mine. All I can do is pray, keep my faith, and remain humble.

Shirley Nevala-Chavie is another Supply Chain Services Team member who assisted with flood relief but she used her connections through work to make it happen.

Shirley is the operations manager and in business development at the Dallas, Texas, location. Shirley had a Customer call to see if she could find a carrier that would be willing to deliver pet food to Houston for the relief efforts. After a few calls, Fastenal came through and offered to pick up the supplies in Hamlin, Texas, to deliver to the Denton, Texas, hub. Shirley

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Volunteers man WSOR table at Wisconsin fair

By Andra Bryan Stefanoni
Contributing Writer

Three rail fans have volunteered for just under a decade to man a WSOR/Watco booth at the Alto Fair in Wisconsin, taking time to share information about the rail industry and Watco’s service offerings, about Operation Lifesaver, and to promote rail careers at Watco.

And Don Meinders, Louie Wierenga, and Ron Bolsstad were back at it again this year! “The fair allows Watco to have exposure to visitors from about 10 surrounding counties. “I met people that came from more than four hours away to enjoy this fair,” said Katie Sackett, director of commercial for WSOR. “It’s a great way to say hello and thank you, as many attending this fair have some crossover and association to the WSOR.”

The fair, which has all the usual fare — tractor pulls, carnival rides, homemade baked goods, and the like — is also where people socialize and, according to the local newspaper, “teach kids about tradition, responsibility and achievement.”

The area also is heavily agricultural, with railroads there serving farmers and related industries. And, the area is steeped in railroad history. The WSOR runs through many of the towns in Fond du Lac and the region.

So, it seems like the perfect venue to promote all things rail.

Meinders has been supporting the WSOR at the booth since he stepped in to cover for a friend. “I was called in to cover the table when the former owner’s father passed away,” he said. “All the company officials were attending the funeral and they did not want to be a no-show at the fair, so through a friendship association I was asked to cover the table for that day.”

He’s known for blowing air through his clapsed hands that sounds just like a train whistle. He uses the gimmick as a way to draw kids to the booth. “When I first witnessed it, I was blown away — no pun intended,” Sackett said. “The kids love it so much that they come by multiple times to ask him to do it again. It’s awesome!”

Sackett said his dedication, and that of the other volunteers, is much appreciated. “It’s a wonderful feeling to know that we have such dedicated supporters who are willing to volunteer their time to work our booth for 12-plus hours a day,” she said.

Meinders considers it an honor. “I enjoy people that I get to visit with and the energy of this event,” he said.

Austin Western Railroad Track Laborer Jeremy Cazares was noted to be a high caliber Team member with unlimited potential.

His adherence to our Customer First Foundation Principles comes naturally and will be a key factor in his future success with Watco.

We are grateful for his contributions to this Team on the AWRR, and we are excited about his future railroad career. The sky is the limit for the young man we know as “mijo.”

Have a Team member you’d like to share a story about in a future Dispatch? Send it, along with a photo, to tvanbecelaere@watcocompanies.com with “Spotlight on Success” in the subject line.

www.watcocompanies.com
#WatcoMoves

Editor’s note: Earlier this year, we kicked off a new feature in The Dispatch and on our social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn) that features products Watco transports before they arrive at the end user.

Product: Waste
Location: New York City

Most of what Watco moves are commodities that consumers want to purchase or use. But in New York City, Watco moves something that everyone wants to be rid of: garbage, or Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) as it’s known in the industry.

Watco has recently entered into a 20-year contract with two five-year extensions that delivers New York City cost-effective and environmentally friendly transportation of MSW to distant landfills. Watco will be loading barges of containerized MSW at terminals in Brooklyn and unloading the barges in Elizabeth, New Jersey for furtherance to rail served landfills.

“We’re fortunate to play a key role in the supply chain solution the City has chosen – if we shut down, if the supply chain fails in any of its links, the city would be awash in garbage in no time,” said Marc Massoglia, senior vice president of commercial. “It’s critical to the Department of Sanitation and their plans for reducing congestion on city streets, and in making sure waste is disposed of properly.”

Watco has operated in NYC with three transfer stations: Bronx and Brooklyn which came with the first acquisition of Kinder Morgan terminals and Queens which was opened as a growth initiative in 2015 after the acquisition.

A new project, a marine transfer station, accepts 1,600 tons of containerized waste from the Department of Sanitation, uses cranes to load it onto barges on Hamilton Avenue in Brooklyn, and moves it across the harbor to a railyard to move it to its final destination.

The project relies on the efforts of 15 Team Members.

A second Brooklyn location, Southwest Brooklyn, is being built now and will come online next year, Massoglia said.

In a story by Waste Today, Mayor Bill de Blasio said for far too long, communities in the five boroughs were saturated by waste transfer stations and resulting truck traffic. This project shifts the burden.

According to data shared by Waste Today, full implementation of the plan will reduce annual truck travel by more than 60 million miles, including more than 5 million miles in and around New York City.

“When these stations are fully up and running, overburdened communities will breathe easier knowing 200 fewer trucks per day will be carrying trash through Brooklyn,” de Blasio told Waste Today.

The giant crane at Brooklyn’s Hamilton MTS location dwarfs Watco Team Members. The crane is used to move containers to barges.

Team Members at the MTS Elizabeth, New Jersey, location where they unload the containers from barges to truck.

Team Members 85’ in the air on the new Hamilton MTS crane in Brooklyn, New York. A foggy downtown Manhattan is seen in the background.

Hurricane Harvey continued

Continued from page 1 - will then meet friends in Denton to load up and deliver to the animal shelters and the Red Cross. All products, time and services were donated.

Other projects are in the works to provide relief for the flood victims. Pittsburg Team Members Sofronia Howard and Michele Howard headed to Houston with a large U-Haul truck full of supplies such as water, diapers, cleaning supplies, and other items that the area mangers had requested.

Howard said that when she was calling around for supplies and explaining what she was doing, one of the ladies at the vendors bought two boxes of diapers and some small toys and coloring books for the kids. The Red Cross also donated 32 boxes of blankets to take down.

Watco is also selling #WatcoStrong T-shirts to help raise money for relief efforts.

“We’ve had a really great response from our Team in just the first few days of the Houston T-shirt sales. Many have donated above and beyond just the T-shirt price. Our Team, Customers, and Vendors are always ready to step up when others are in need especially when it involves our fellow Team Members. The relationships we pride ourselves on are second to none in this industry and hold true during times like these,” said Cassie Bicknell, event coordinator for the All Aboard Foundation.

Team member Amy Parady had water up to her driveway but fortunately, it never entered her home. What did enter her home were five strangers who she offered to house because they had lost their home. Separately, Parady set up a Go Fund Me account with plans to donate the funds raised to her church to help those impacted by the floods. After 30 hours she had raised $4,180, with many Watco Team Members, Customers, and friends in the rail industry helping to exceed her goal of $3,500.

Currently there are more than 40 Team members that have reported losses due to the floods but that number is expected to rise as the weeks go by. Although Texas felt the brunt of the storm, parts of Louisiana also were impacted by flooding.

Dan Smith, Watco chief operating officer, said, “When we see devastation like we saw with Hurricane Harvey, it should remind all of us at Watco that the most important thing is the Safety of our Team Members and their families. I am very proud of the spirit demonstrated by so many Watco Team Members this past week. The way our Team came together to take care of each other was humbling. Even though some of our Watco family lost so much, you can bet we will all work tirelessly to make sure we get our Team Members the help they need wherever we can.”

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The first Watco container train service in Western Australia is so far a success, with leadership describing the acquisition and commencement of managing the Intermodal Group as “seamless.”

“All of our Team Members, at both the Forrestfield Terminal and North Quay Rail Terminal, have been very positive about the changes thus far and have been steadily adopting the Watco culture and value,” said Grant Thompson, WWA’s chief operating officer.

IMG is an integrated provider of services, including rail, integrated logistics of containerized freight, storage, and handling of containers.

Watco made the acquisition in January, with Operations Zone Manager Russell Griffiths, Safety and Support Manager Chris Porter, IMG Safety Manager Russell Stent, IMG Supervisors Jon Stonehouse and Damian Nunn leading the systems and process transition required to ensure success.

That Team managed the transition from the previous Rail Supplier (SCT), commencing operations in July.

“We are very grateful for the effort these Team Members have put in to get to where we are today,” Thompson said, adding that during the time that Watco has managed IMG, “we have gone against trend and have been able to record consistent monthly volumes through our North Quay Rail Terminal at Fremantle Port.”

Intermodal has averaged 9279 teu per month from January to June, compared to 8794 teu per month for the previous six months, according to Thompson — a remarkable effort by the Team considering road transport in the same period is down by up to 20 percent per month.

In May, the operation achieved 10334 teu for the month — the highest monthly volume since May 2014.

IMG is working on multiple projects to increase volume market share, Thompson said. To date, IMG has had success in acquiring volumes from carriers that have not previously used the service. He attributed this to the implementation of the Customer First Foundation Principles and understanding what the Customers require to service their needs.

And, through the dedication of Team Members, IMG is challenging the road freight transport market sector in Western Australia and is making headway in the industry to drive more freight volumes on rail from road.

Thompson said that includes working closely with stevedores at the port and other service providers such as shippers and exporters to ensure an efficient supply chain.

Watco’s first intermodal train to provide service in Western Australia.
Inaugural MOW Ground School held at Watco STAT Center

by Andra Bryan Stefanoni - Contributing Writer & Tracie VanBecelaere - Managing Editor

While public schools were taking a break this summer, there was a lot of learning going on at the Watco STAT Center in Birmingham, Alabama.

In July, the center’s inaugural MOW Ground School, conducted by Michael Milligan, manager of Engineering Safety and Training, was held for new Team Members from the Lubbock & Western, Austin Western, Alabama Southern, and the Kanawha River railroads.

And in August, a three-week conductor training was held for 28 Team Members from 13 Watco railroads — from California to North Carolina, and from Wisconsin to Louisiana.

Mike Smith, director of Engineering Safety and Training, says MOW ground schools typically are held close to new Team Members’ profit centers, usually in a hotel conference room, and in most cases are completed in three days. Completed on an as-needed basis, scheduling them is difficult for both the trainers as well as the profit center managers. And while that method allows trainers to cover the required rules and provide some introduction into maintenance practices, it limits the opportunity to conduct field training.

The STAT Center changed all of that.

"Having training at the STAT Center affords us the ability to lengthen the training to a five-day class, which gives us time to cover more rules," Smith said. "And the location of the STAT Center, with assistance from Kris Colley of the Birmingham Terminal Railway, also provides us with dedicated tracks and MOW tools and equipment to allow for two full days of field training."

Smith said the Center also gives Team Members an opportunity to gain hands-on knowledge of the tools and equipment they will be utilizing in their daily activities.

"We plan to make this a normal practice and going forward will conduct one of these classes every month," Smith said.

Doing so will allow profit center managers to schedule their hiring and make arrangements to send their new Team Members to the class.

"Our goal is to provide new Team Members with a higher quality training experience, so that they leave the class with the confidence and knowledge to go back to their locations and perform their job duties in a more safe and efficient manner," Smith said.

One such Team member was the LBWR’s Christopher Cline, who received the Golden Spike Award for this performance in the class. Even with five years of experience under his belt, he said he benefited from class and learned a lot.

"It was the most thorough MOW class that I’ve ever taken," he said. "Where most classes have been one or two days, this was an entire week. Being in the field with Mike’s class was a bonus because we learned more about tools that we use and the right way to use them."

Many companies rely on other employees to teach the new ones, and Cline said that can be hard because "you’re only going to learn what they know."

Conductor trainings

The STAT Center also was home to a three-week conductor training course taught by Geoff Holder. Todd Hamilton and Brad Hayes also provide instruction.

"We start with the basics and go through all the tests; it’s designed for the new guy right off the street," Holder said.

Upon graduating from the course, Team Members will begin on-the-job training on their home railroads, working toward their freight conductor certification.

"The summer course, which wrapped up mid-August, was the fourth such course of the year. By December, the Center will have hosted seven. Prior to the Center’s construction, the course was taught “in depots, hotels, and even storage sheds,” Holder said.

"The problem was, a lot of places might not have had the equipment to do hands-on stuff – it was not the best learning environment," he said. "What we like about this is it’s hands-on stuff at one central location, and everyone is getting same curriculum, and the same tools from the same instructors."

The Center also has something that depots, hotels, and storage sheds don’t: locomotive simulators, a model train layout, and freight car with cut-outs with all the car parts. And while Holder and the instructional Team are proud of what they’re offering, they’re not done yet.

"We’re constantly adding stuff to the course," he said. "It’s always evolving. We’re always thinking of new ideas, group break-out sessions, and adding field time – we want people to go out and actually switch cars, do brake tests. What we have here is the best way to learn."

Team Members who attended the inaugural MOW Ground School were (l-r): Taylor Johnsey, ABS; Adam Blethen, KNWA; Zachary Bolling, KNWA; Christopher Cline, LBWR; Luis Medina, AWRR; Corbyn Smith, AWRR; Tyler Summar, Landon Ginn, LBWR; Andrew Alvarez, TXN; and Desmond Calvillo, TXN.

MRO Team recognized for superior performance

Watco MRO (mobile repair operation) Team Members Shawn Estes, mechanical technician, Tim Henderson, mechanical superintendent, and Tyler Smith, mechanical technician, provide services to the Veolia James River plant in North Chesterfield, Virginia.

by Tracie VanBecelaere

Managing Editor

There are some places you look forward to going to and for Linn Herman, director of Car Repair, the Veolia James River plant in North Chesterfield is one of those places.

"I walk in the door and the plant supervisors come up right away and tell me what an outstanding job our Team is doing and how pleased they are with the service they are providing and what a good leader Tim is," said Herman. "It’s a good feeling to get feedback like that."

Courtney Wright, James River Plant Manager, Regeneration Services for Veolia North America feels that Tim Henderson, mechanical supervisor, is in her words, "doing a fantastic job."

Wright stated, "His leadership and commitment to safety have been a real asset, especially in some recent activities at the site."

Henderson and his Team provide a number of services at the plant and the question would be "what don’t they do? They switch cars, perform mechanical repairs as needed, pro-actively inspect the cars and the tracks, and even help out cleaning the facility if needed.

"Whatever they need, we do it," said Henderson. "We work a 7-3:30 shift, but we are always on call to serve them if they need us."

Wright said that at one time cars could sit for days, even weeks, before someone would come to fix them. Now, with the cars being repaired on-site they are able to provide better, more efficient service to their customers.

"Everything here at the plant is in much better condition with them (MRO Team) being partners here on site," said Wright. "Tim’s leadership really shines through here; the acid that we work with is corrosive and it’s important that everything is taken care of so that problems don’t arise, Tim and his team have done a great job."
Zacha Terminal welcomes new asphalt Customer

by Andra Bryan Stefano
Contributing Writer

The Project Management Team and Terminal & Port Services Team reached a milestone this summer in Dallas, Texas: They completed a new construction project with a new Customer in record time, turning an underutilized asset owned by Kansas City Southern Railway into a profitable center.

When the KCS opened a new, state-of-the-art intermodal facility, the decision to turn the previous Zacha intermodal terminal into a transload terminal seemed like the logical choice. In the initial transition, the Zacha terminal struggled to reinvent itself until last October after the KCS awarded Watco as its operator of the facility – the 55th terminal on Watco’s roster.

Previously, the facility offered 9,523 feet of track space within the terminal and 80 acres of outside storage for Customers. The new construction project, started May 22, added 1,300 feet of new track and was completed in just 79 days.

“The amazing part is not the length of track but the time frame in which the Team got the track laid down, giving the Customer time to meet goals for this year for unloading and selling asphalt in the Dallas market,” said Derek Penner, senior vice president of Strategy and Customer Development.

The Team also built a system that allows 10 railcars of asphalt at a time to be heated to 350 degrees — a process that is both time consuming and tedious, Penner said. It features a 30,000-gallon tank where product can be stored. The operation is designed to unload 60,000 bbls of asphalt each month.

Just a few days after completing construction, the Terminal & Port Services Team loaded its first asphalt truck. Days later, the Team had upped the number to three. Now, they’re working toward reaching the system’s full capabilities of loading 30 in a day.

“We’re excited to be progressing in the right direction with our Customers, the KCS, and building our Team at the terminal,” said Terminal Manager Jake Gandy.

Today, 11 Customers utilize the terminal that once had just one Customer on site.

“We’re proud that we were able to plan and built for a large-scale Customer within that operation in a pretty short time, and that we redeveloped an underused asset for KCS,” Penner said. “This was one of those projects that works really well for everyone involved.”

AWRR Roadmaster to serve on Texas Operation Lifesaver Board of Directors

by Tracie Van Becelaere
Managing Editor

Austin Western Roadmaster Dustin Hiser thought it would be interesting to become certified as an Operation Lifesaver volunteer. What he didn’t know was how quickly his role would change.

Hiser said once he checked out the process and completed the required online training, things got interesting. The State Director from Texas Operation Lifesaver called and asked if Hiser would be willing to represent Watco on the state level as Watco currently didn’t have any representatives on the Operation Lifesaver board.

“I ran the idea by John Anderson (AWRR General Manager) and Bill Goldsberry (Vice President-Division 2) and they were both very supportive and encouraged me to become a member,” said Hiser.

Anderson said Hiser is committed to taking the MOW Team and our Austin Western property to the next level.

“He said something a few weeks ago that has stuck with me: ‘If we want to get to the next level, we need next level-minded people,’ Anderson said.

With numerous changes underway on the Austin Western now and a lot of growth, Anderson said the Team wants the AWRR wants to go from a good railroad to a great railroad.

“We say that good is the enemy of great, we don’t want to settle, we want to push forward and make our Customers and Watco proud,” Anderson said. “We will accomplish our goals with leaders like Dustin who is not afraid to volunteer and put himself out there for the greater good of our Team and Customers.”

Hiser, a nine-year railroader, said he felt a bit overwhelmed when he walked into the meeting.

“I was the youngest in the room by 20 years and everyone else was with a Class 1 railroad in a management role or a public information role. Here I was, a roadmaster,” he said. “I feel like it’s a worthy cause and I’m excited to serve on the board of directors.”

Hiser has plans to train one or more of his Team Members as a volunteer for Operation Lifesaver so they can go into classrooms and educate students on railroad safety — especially important because plans are in motion to reopen a stretch of track on the line between Elgin and Giddings. That line has been dormant since 1985 and it’s important to get someone to provide presentation to the schools and other groups to emphasize that trains will once again be running on the tracks.

Duo shares 45G info

Watco’s Chief Global Strategist Ed McKechnie and Vice President of Government and Industry Relations Laura McNichol spent time in Washington, DC, last month to let elected officials know how important the 45G tax credit and tax reform are to short line railroads.

While highway infrastructure is maintained by federal and state governments, freight rail infrastructure is maintained by private sector investments. The 45G provides short lines with the ability to make crucial infrastructure investments.
Watco Wellness: Tough years inspire lifestyle change for Parady

By Andra Bryan Stefanoni
Contributing Writer

Amy Parady, vice president of business development and the corporate liaison between Supply Chain Services and Watco, wasn’t planning on any big celebrations for her 45th birthday on August 29. But she bought herself a special outfit anyway — something to wear for a photo that would document the end result of a long journey.

Parady has been working toward giving herself the best 45th birthday present she could think of: To lose 52.5 pounds and to quit smoking.

Her journey was an attempt to reinvent herself after coming through what she described as the worst five years of her life: a divorce after 20 years of marriage, and becoming an empty nester when her children left home, relocating, the death of her father, and just other life challenges.

“Usually age doesn’t bother me, but for some reason it started weighing on my mind heavily that I was turning 45 after those five years of struggle,” she said. “It happened all at the same time, and it was devastating.”

Once she set her mind on a quest to self-improvement, she turned to Facebook to share her journey with others.

“I felt like if I had accountability to a group of people, even if they do live somewhere else, I’d be more likely to stick with it,” she said.

Parady created a hashtag: #FitAndFabBy45.

She stopped smoking and started clean eating.

And she shared her successes and set-backs with her followers.

“Sometimes I fell off the horse,” she said.

“But I made a solid commitment, and there was no reason for me to not be able to quit fully. That was my birthday present to myself. So, I just got back on the horse.”

For weight loss, she turned to Ideal Protein, a program managed through a physician.

“Essentially, it’s a very high protein, low carb diet,” she said.

It was the right choice for her because she’s single and she travels a lot, and it provided structure when it comes to how many vegetables and how much meat she must eat each day.

Each week, her physician took her physical measurements, and assessed the amount of body fat. She admits to cheating a few times — almost always conscious decisions, like to eat a piece of someone’s birthday cake or go with friends to a Mexican restaurant — but she’s OK with that.

“No one's perfect, and yeah, I cheat, but I’m going to keep getting back on the horse,” she said.

Along the way, she found she was helping others — and that felt good.

“I have always enjoyed motivating and inspiring people,” she said, “and during this process people began reaching out to me privately in messages about smoking and weight loss — that they were really struggling, saying ‘Please help me’ and ‘How are you doing this?’

What it became was it was more incentive to me not to let people down. One of my passions in life is inspiring and motivating people.”

“One thing I really want to emphasize is that it was a high protein, low carbohydrate structure. There were no drugs or surgeries or procedures.”

“A nurse took a before picture of me and I didn’t even look at it as I imagined it was just hideous,” Parady said.

Her best friend, Jenifer Smith, a photographer, scheduled a photo shoot for Parady last week so that she could make a big reveal of her success to her followers, who have encouraged her.

“Now I’m ready to put them side by side beginning of my new life with everything put together.”

Blue Ridge Southern celebrates three-year anniversary

by Tracie VanBeeclaere
Managing Editor

Team Members at the Blue Ridge Southern Railroad (BLU) celebrated their three-year anniversary at the beautiful Cataloochee Guest Ranch in the Smoky Mountains.

A large number of Team Members gathered at the historic resort to enjoy food, family, and friendship. There were door prizes for the adults and kids and Team Members were given a travel bag with the railroad logo.

General Manager Darl Farris said, “It was a relaxing couple of hours that we were able to spend with each other and enjoy the view from the top of the mountain. The weather turned out really nice and I think everyone went home with something.”

Our Team Members do so much but often it’s the family behind the scenes that make things happen and the BLU is a good example. Sally Farris, wife of GM Darl, is the railroad’s unofficial house mom.

“Sally has created a unique relationship with Team. She is always cooking, decorating, and providing a family-type environment,” said Bill Goldsberry, vice president of operations, Division 2.
Watco’s MSDS database comes into the Electronic Age

By Andra Bryan Stefanoni
Contributing Writer

If a Team Member is involved in, or becomes aware of, an incident — they need to know what to do immediately, without hesitation—whether the incident is contact with a potentially harmful chemical, a derailment, a motor vehicle incident or a release/spill to the environment.

Two new electronic tools, subscribed to and kicked off in 2016-2017 under the direction of EHS leadership, provide that direction—KMI (aka VelocityEHS) and MSDSonline.

"It’s all about reducing risk, providing a consistent reporting mechanism, and ensuring improved awareness in the workplace," according to Terry Gosney, vice president of Environmental for Watco.

These proactive tools make those objectives possible. KMI is utilized for compliance with regulations through communication of action items and deadlines, as well as reporting/tracking incidents and ongoing audits and inspections. MSDSonline is a massive 10,000,000 record database of Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS; now referred to as Safety Data Sheets or SDS) designed for improved communication of hazards in the workplace.

"In the past, each facility was virtually on its own to maintain incident reports, compliance documentation, action reminders and a paper copy of their MSDS book. Now, through these electronic tools, the process in standardized across Watco, is much less confusing, and is easier to maintain and access," Gosney said.

Driven by OSHA and EPA regulations, Gosney emphasized that documentation is an essential part of a safe work culture. By maintaining a historical database of incidents, root causes may be identified and future issues may be avoided. With a current chemical inventory, every Team Member has access, both physically and electronically, to information that may safeguard against personal injury, property damage, and environmental impacts.

"Anyone with a Watco e-mail address and a mobile device (including a tablet, cell phone or laptop) is able to access these electronic tools. 'Paper is very cumbersome,' Gosney said. 'It's difficult to keep up-to-date; for example, if someone had to see an SDS quickly, they may have a hard time finding it in a big paper binder. You always want to be able to access this information quickly, especially in an emergency.'

With the new MSDSonline e-tracking, any revised SDS will be provided electronically, facilities will be better able to track which products are being bought and brought on-site, facilities will remain in compliance at all times and worker safety will be enhanced.

As important as helping to introduce industry-leading electronic tools, Gosney is proud of the highly skilled and qualified Environmental Team developed since he joined Watco almost three years ago (when Watco had only 29 terminals and ports—now up to over 80). "This Team is tremendous knowledge-base and great capacity for educating; and that’s important because there’s a lot of misinformation in our industries with regard to environmental compliance."

Gosney concluded, "Watco leadership has been tremendously supportive of our Team’s development. That has been the key to bringing on these quality folks, allowing us to maintain industry-leading environmental compliance. Watco is the most supportive and safety-oriented company I have ever worked for!"

Environmental Team Members cover all Watco assets. Their assignments include:

- Terry Gosney, VP—Environmental.
- John Bell, Environmental Director, Industrial Hygiene; responsible for industrial hygiene studies, surveys and mitigation implementation.
- Gautam Agrawala, Environmental Director—Houston Division; John Vogler, environmental manager—Rivers; John Bell, environmental director—Occupational Health; Shonta’ Moore, environmental manager (Air)—Houston; Sean Strong, environmental manager—West; and Brent Shields, environmental manager—South.

The Austin Western Railroad Team enjoys the Round Rock Express

The Austin Western Railroad recently held its first Family Day. The event was held at the Dell Diamond Stadium in Austin, Texas, where Team Members and their families enjoyed a Round Rock Express baseball game.

John Anderson, AWR general manager said, "We had a great turn out and it was very nice to meet the spouses and children of our Team Members. We wanted to let our Team know that they and their family are important to us and this was a great way to showcase our appreciation for the families."

"Like in any railroad operation, there are sacrifices that are made for the job, and unfortunately, sometimes family events are missed because of the nature of our business. We wanted to express our appreciation and show a different side of our company."

The children all received a free pass to the Kids Zone, and the Team enjoyed a meal catered in an air conditioned banquet room on the upper deck with great seats for the game.

"You can’t get much better than four rows up from first base," said Anderson. "And our Team and their families earned it."

Anderson hopes to make this event an annual one that the Team Members and their families will look forward to attending each year.
Watco does “Goode” in Corporate Challenge

By Andra Bryan Stefanoni
Contributing Writer

When Larry O’Neal moved from the east coast to Pittsburg, Kansas, to join the Watco Team as a systems analyst at the home office, he didn’t know anyone. Making his transition even more challenging was leaving behind his wife, Lesa, and younger son, Robert, who will remain in North Carolina until Robert graduates in May.

Now, five months later, O’Neal says the fact that Watco functions as a family has helped with that transition. What also helped, he said, was participating in the town-wide Corporate Challenge as part of the Watco Team. Held for four days in August, the event pitted eight large Pittsburg-based companies against each other in games like Disc Golf Toss, Bowling, and Team Spirit. Dozens of Watco Team Members competed.

Watco brought home the 1st place trophy last year, and took 2nd place honors this year.

“One of the reasons I volunteered to participate in these games was to meet others in the Watco family,” O’Neal said. “I met some folks that I wouldn’t have met ordinarily, but I think these games went beyond just that. The camaraderie of everyone here is wonderful. Everyone works hard to make Watco the best company it can be.”

He also became more recognizable to fellow Team Members by performing in the Lip Sync Battle as a “back-up guitarist” to CEO Rick Webb “singing” an original version of Johnny B. Goode called “Watco Be Goode.”

“A few people who saw me in the games came up to me the week after and said they saw me dancing on stage, and they gave me a thumbs-up,” O’Neal said, “which felt nice.”

“And the Watco Team Members and their families couldn’t have been prouder that Mr. Webb participated, not only in the Lip Sync but that he and his family stayed to the very end to hear the results,” O’Neal said. “While he is the leader of all of us, most of the time he is just one of us. Fooling around, laughing, and genuinely enjoying himself. To me, that is great. Another reason I enjoy coming to work each day.”

Watco Team Captain Amber Gardner, who coordinated Watco’s participation and like O’Neal, performed in the Lip Sync Battle, agreed.

“One really unique thing about our Team is that Watco was the only Team who had a CEO that not only showed up to the Wednesday night final events, but also participated!” Gardner said. “This kind of leadership sets Watco apart from other businesses in Pittsburg and across the globe!”

Watco’s 2nd place ranking was just six points behind the 1st place team, National Pizza Company, which owns Pizza Hut and Wendy’s franchises across the U.S.

To see videos of Watco’s Lip Sync performance and Team spirit chant, visit our Facebook page.

WSOR HOSTS RAIL EXCURSION

Every July members of the Midwest Association of Rail Shippers (MARS) flock to a summer meeting in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. The summer meeting is heavily attended and attendee’s come from all over the United States.

This year was no exception.

MARS kicked off the meeting with a Scholarship Golf Outing and on the following day there was a full schedule of informative feature presentations.

The WSOR decided to take advantage as this event was happening in their “backyard” by hosting a business car rail excursion for many of their Customers, including a few rail partners, to close out this association event.

The train rolled along the Wisconsin countryside from Zenda to Janesville and back again while the Watco Team Members entertained their guests.

Doug Conway, vice president of Commercial, said, “The excursion train provided our Commercial Team the unique opportunity to share some social time with our Customers. The time spent socializing as well as talking about business in this relaxed and fun environment is extremely valuable.”

“One of our largest customer’s representatives even commented that she had been in her rail contracting team for over 25 years and had never been invited to ride a train, she said it was an experience of a lifetime!”

Members of the Midwest Rail Shippers were treated to a ride on the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad’s business cars during their July meeting.
Groundbreaking held for Glacier Rail Park

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

For ten years a rail park in Kalispell, Montana, has been in the works and on August 22, a groundbreaking ceremony was held to celebrate the start of construction on the Glacier Rail Park.

Construction on the five-year infrastructure and development project will begin this month, transforming the 40-acre tract into a business park that will spur more than $38 million in public and private investment.

Watco’s Mission Mountain Railroad will be providing rail service to the Rail Park. The two companies currently using rail in the Kalispell core area are CHS Inc. and NorthWest Drywall and Building Supply. The two companies will move next year to new facilities in Glacier Rail Park. Additionally, the Rail Park will offer team track for use by businesses located outside of the Rail Park that require occasional transload services or infrequent access to rail.

Special guests at the groundbreaking included Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., as well as representatives from the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Rail Administration, BNSF, Watco Companies, and Mission Mountain Railroad.

The City of Kalispell and Flathead County Economic Development Authority are partners in the project and they received a $10 million Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation for investment in roads, rail, traffic signals, and a pedestrian trail. This creates additional opportunities for investment and development in Kalispell’s Westside Tax Increment Finance District.

The project plans include removing the rail tracks from downtown Kalispell and replacing them with the pedestrian trail. The project also will build north-south connector roads and open up property to redevelopment. One additional site of 8 to 10 acres located directly on the rail and zoned for industrial use is available for lease or purchase.

Six Terminal Teams gather at Six Flags

Six Terminal Teams from the northeast gathered together in late July at Six Flags Amusement Park in Jackson, New Jersey. The Team Members and their families enjoyed a day of fun at the park, along with a cookout and picnic.

“It was a great team building event, as Team Members from Brooklyn, Bronx, Queens, Linden, Bayway, and PES all had the opportunity to meet and get to know each other,” said Brian Spiller, assistant vice president of Terminal Operations.

Also in attendance were members of the Regional Safety and Environmental Team and their families.

Door prizes were donated by Spiller, Scott Rudolph, vice president of operations, and each of the terminal managers. One large drawing was for a big screen TV was held. Chances for the TV were three chances for $10 and all the money collected in the raffle was donated back to charity on behalf of the Watco Team Members.

The winner of the TV raffle was Sunil Bangari, terminal manager for the New York City Terminals.

“The winner of the TV raffle was Sunil Bangari, terminal manager for the New York City Terminals. “Not only do I appreciate all the hard work our Team puts in but also what their families do as well,” said Spiller.

Ann Arbor Team cheers on the Toledo Mudhens

The Ann Arbor Railroad’s Team Safety and Improvement Committee (TS&IC) hit it out of the park when they planned a family picnic for the Team Members. The group arranged for Team Members and their families to attend a minor league baseball game of a local favorite, the Toledo Mudhens. The event was catered and there was ice cream for everyone to keep them cool.

“We wanted a relaxing event where the Team and their families could have fun and get to know each other,” said Arturo Perez, AA TS&IC leader. “Everyone seemed to have a good time and we hope to do it again next summer.”

Top photo: Bob Trevino (T&E) family. Bottom photo: Mike Hayden (CMO) family.
Births

Owen Allen Zurawski

Linda Jordan and her husband Marcus are proud to announce the birth of their grandson
Owen Allen Zurawski.

Owen was born on August 16, 2017, to Danielle Costello and Nick Zurawski. He weighed 7 pounds and 8 ounces. Owen is the Jordan’s fourth grandchild, making a total of three boys and one girl.

Linda serves as the terminal manager of the Chicago Heights Terminal in Chicago Heights, Illinois.

1,000 day safety milestone achieved at Ferndale Terminal

It may seem like “only yesterday” that our rail team began their initial training for operations at our facility. The reality however, is that it was over 1,000 days ago. What makes that number particularly remarkable is that it is also the number of days the rail rack team has gone without injuries. Safety is a focus across the organization. Every task, even walking from point-to-point, has some type of risk involved. The only way to mitigate those safety risks is to raise your individual awareness and take personal safety accountability for yourself and those around you.

Bryan Meyer, terminal manager, discusses this further. “We’re building a family atmosphere out here” said Meyer. “I never want to go to your house and explain to your family that you can’t make it home. So, we watch out for each other in everything we do—we are our brother’s keeper, and we’ve built a relationship of trust on that.”

Help us celebrate the success in safety that our rail rack team has achieved by asking yourself a couple of questions:
- How are you helping mitigate risks in your unit?
- Am I focused on completing each task at hand safely?
- Does your personal safety accountability include the safety of those around you?

Article reproduced from the Ferndale newsletter written by Josh Summers
Kanawha River Railroad celebrates one-year anniversary

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

Team Members from the Kanawha River Railroad enjoyed beautiful weather as they celebrated their one-year anniversary on August 1. A pig was roasted and all the fixings were served to the Team. Following lunch, departments challenged each other in games of cornhole. Hats and one-year anniversary shirts were given out to the Team Members to thank them for their service.

"This railroad is nothing that everyone thought it would be a year ago," said General Manager Derrick Jackson. "We thought we'd be a 10 train a month railroad and just this past month we did 38 coal trains alone, that's not counting our manifest trains."

Jackson added that the railroad is constantly evolving and continuing to grow.

"Very few weeks have gone by when the marketing team hasn't brought us a new opportunity to work on, it keeps us on our toes."

Jackson said he's got a good combination of Team Members, some from the area and some that have come from several states away.

"We tried to schedule the day so that as many Team Members could be there as possible, it was a good day and we enjoyed having our Pittsburg guests Rick Baden, Dan Smith, and Rachael Peterson there to share the day with us."

Left photo: Chuck McCall gets a proper send off with a cake commemorating his 41 years in the industry. Right photo: Chuck's Team Members brought in lunch to wish him a happy retirement. Chuck is the second from the left in the front row.