Watco rolls out a new logo design

By Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

It's official! Watco Companies has a new logo!

Unveiled on September 29, at Watco's home office in Pittsburg, Kansas, it projects a modern, clean look.

"Over the past 34 years Watco has gone through a tremendous amount of change. Our Customers have taken us into so many different service areas and led us to new opportunities, and we have again outgrown the accuracy of our logo," said Chief Operating Officer Dan Smith.

The colors of yellow and black have been used since the start of Watco and will remain the same.

Back in 1983, when selecting the colors to represent Watco, CEO Rick Webb, a student at Pittsburg State University at the time, turned to other Pittsburgh teams for inspiration – the Pittsburgh Steelers and the Pittsburgh Pirates, who used black and yellow to represent their teams.

"Our first locomotive was an all yellow locomotive," said Webb. "We found out real fast how hard it was to keep clean."

More black was added to the paint schemes from then on.

Founder Dick Webb, who had a bit of orneriness in him, had one of the early locomotives painted silver and black to needle the area Kansas City Chiefs fans who hated seeing anything the color of team rival, the Oakland Raiders.

"That didn't last long," laughed Webb.

Since 1983 there have been four different icons representing Watco.

The first logo was designed by a Pittsburg State University student. A second logo was designed by Chris Blancho, who had also designed the annual St. Paddy's Day shirts for a bar named McCarthy's that Webb owned at the time.

When deciding to go with a third logo, a group gathered in the Watco basement to determine what was needed.

"We thought it was a good idea to add a truck to represent transloading and to emphasize our "truck-like" rail services," said Webb.

The fourth logo was also designed by a group, this time wanting to focus on the company's Customer First philosophy and as part of that, listening to the Customer and understanding the Customers needs, which allows us to grow together.

"This last one doesn't fully encompass what we are today. We have our Supply Chain Services side of the business, we actually have more terminals than railroads, and we have our car services side. I'm thankful for the Team that put this together and I think the new logo is going to be phenomenal," said Webb.

The logo redesign also provides a jumping-off point for a more formal branding campaign. Branding guidelines can be found on the Watco web site (watcompanies.com), under About Us/Branding.

Watco CEO Rick Webb gives an explanation of the different logos that Watco has used through the years during the new logo roll out.

Watco's first logo was designed by a Pittsburg State University student and Chris Blancho designed logo number 2. Logos 3 and 4 were designed by a combination of Team members.
**Wisconsin Team Member makes sure right-of-way remains bee-utiful**

There are several reasons for keeping the right-of-way near the railroad tracks mowed, and one of them is to keep our neighbors in the communities we operate happy.

However, in one area the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad operates, they received a special request to not mow the right-of-way.

Beekeeper Jeanne Hansen sent in the following account of how Roadmaster Chris Jacobson helped solve a problem she encountered.

As a back-yard beekeeper in Madison, Wisconsin, I am intimately aware of the lack of flowers for my bees. They need nectar for honey, yes, but they also need pollen for their other nutritional needs - protein, vitamins, minerals, fats. Every patch of mowed lawn is a desert for bees, with next to no flowers, which makes my heart bleed.

It isn't only the honey bees. Moths, butterflies, beneficial beetles and bugs of every sort need wild flowers.

Thus, as I biked to the community center every week, I asked myself, "Why is this railroad right-of-way being mowed all summer?"

**Refugio Terminal in business again after Hurricane Harvey**

By Tracie VanBecelaere  
Managing Editor

While Hurricane Harvey was rolling in, Refugio, Texas, Terminal Manager John Wiebelhaus was rolling out.

"I'm from the Midwest and have never experienced a hurricane before," said Wiebelhaus. "My wife, kids, and I headed to the Austin area, stayed in a hotel and came back as soon as possible."

Even before he got back, he was on multiple calls checking on Team members to make sure that everyone was safe and to see what support they would be needing.

Refugio Assistant Terminal Manager Hilda Morin braved the storm and stepped in to keep track of all the Team members. When they needed a place to stay she was able to find a spot for them, not an easy task following a storm of that magnitude.

"I made sure my phone was charged up and started calling our Team on Friday to see where they were and made plans to touch base following the hurricane to be sure they had made it through okay and to see what support they needed," said Morin. "There was one Team member I had trouble contacting and when we finally connected it was a big relief, I felt like my family was together again."

David Elizalde, terminal manager at Watco’s Loving, New Mexico, location had a house in the area that he was selling and he offered to let one of the Team members use it. With twin baby boys, she was very appreciative to have a dry place for her family to stay.

Supervisor Roman Salazar hooked the Team up with three pallets of water and also purchased six generators for Team members to use when they couldn't find any locally. He also delivered them to the facility as soon as the roads cleared and he could get through.

Not only did the terminal serve as a distribution center for supplies for the Team, it also served as a staging area for electrical crews that had come down to help restore power.

Wiebelhaus said, "Their organization was impressive. Each night a charter bus would pick the crews up and take them to their hotels and then a fuel truck would drive down the lines and fuel up the trucks while mechanics went through and made any needed repairs to the trucks. The next morning, the buses would drop off the crews and they would hit the road again."

While many Team members were cleaning up their wind and rain ravaged homes, the Refugio Maintenance Team of Richard Wheeler, supervisor; Juan Solis, electrician; JJ (Johnny) Garza, technician; and Victor Foster, technician; were all busy testing the equipment and getting the terminal back up and running.

Electrical trucks used the Refugio, Texas, Terminal as a staging area while restoring power following Hurricane Harvey.

"To say they make us proud is an understatement."

Doug Manuel, Watco senior vice president of Terminal Operations, said, "The Refugio Team responded to the needs of EOG and indeed did bring the operation back to order in a safe and orderly manner. Most, if not all, of the Team members suffered greatly from this storm and all the while they were working to bring the site back to operation, they were helping each other in bringing back their lives to some degree of normalcy. These efforts were greatly recognized by EOG and the team was rewarded for their hard work. As Rick Burton stated "they earned it".

"The close relationship bonded over the years between Watco and EOG is exemplified by the actions of the Refugio Team as well as the recognition bestowed upon them by EOG.

"To say they make us proud is an understatement."
Clay from Western Pennsylvania goes into making the fields helps the players know what to expect as they arrive at the end user.

Customer: DuraEdge
Product: Clay
Location: Cincinnati, Ohio

When watching a baseball game, the last thing most people are thinking about is dirt.

However, to the players and ground keepers at baseball stadiums across the country, dirt is a very important factor of the game. And this is where DuraEdge comes in. DuraEdge provides the dirt that makes up the infield at the stadiums.

What makes DuraEdge’s dirt different from all other dirt? The company mixes different dirt and sand with a special clay mined near the company’s plant and DuraEdge has come up with a blend that is easier to maintain, sturdier and is less prone to “chunking” when a player slides or pivots, resulting in fewer awkward baseball hops.

That clay, mined near the plant, is the only material that appears in all of the company’s infields. DuraEdge ships that clay by barge, train and truck down the Ohio River and across Appalachia’s railways to the company’s nine mixing facilities throughout the country, where it’s blended with locally sourced sand. Plus, the clay is absorbent, letting teams play in rain and even preventing costly postponements. Before the Pittsburgh Pirates installed a DuraEdge infield at their ball park, they averaged 3.6 postponed games each season - that number has been reduced to 2.5 postponed games per year according to data provided by the team.

Recently, Watco’s Terminal and Port division unloaded 900+ tons of the product from a barge at our Cincinnati terminal that should end up on high schools and college fields in the Cincinnati area. The product is currently used at 22 Major League Baseball stadiums.

An interesting note: Pirate City in Bradenton, Florida, where Watco CEO’s son Jake Webb is training, also uses the product on their fields. Using the same product on their Single, Double and Triple-A fields helps the players know what to expect as they are moving up the ranks.

The meal was catered in and cornhole boards were brought in for the team members to play. “We are extremely proud of our Team in reaching this milestone. It has been the attention to detail given by each Team member that has made accomplishing this goal possible. The goal of going two years injury free will only be achieved if we as a Team, continue to coach, encourage, and focus on having a strong safety culture.” said John Vance, AA general manager.

Extra shirts were ordered so if you didn’t get a chance to order or would like additional shirts, you can email tvan@watcocompanies.com for more information.

GBW Railcar Services also sold t-shirts to benefit their team and they too stepped up to the plate by selling approximately 740 shirts.
Conductor "drives" recruiting efforts

As Austin Ludin zooms around in his Gumball Rally car he is also trying to promote the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad (WSOR) and possibly bring in new recruits.

Ludin is a WSOR conductor and works out of the Horicon location. He asked People Services Manager Angela Bunker if the WSOR would like to put their logo on his Gumball Rally car to promote the railroad.

Ludin and his co-driver, Benjamin Slane, participated in the Wisconsin Gumball Rally which was held September 23-24. The race is a two-day rally consisting of a 190-mile trip. It’s the first of its kind running through the heart of Wisconsin, traverses Washington County and continues south with a two-car race team.

Following the race, drivers will take the vehicles to car shows and cruises which will continue to help promote the WSOR in the area communities.

Several different teams from the Terminal and Port Services division pooled their resources to successfully serve a new Customer at the Chicago Heights Terminal.

Viking Mat needed the Chicago Heights Team to handle and store crane mats.

“With the assistance of many Watco Team members, we are trucking, handling and storing crane mats for this new Customer,” said Terminal Manager Linda Jordan. “We are still a couple of weeks out from completing the trucking and handling portion and will store them for an undetermined time at our facility.”

“This project has been a success due to the many efforts of many Watco team members: Ryan Krull, Nick Golian, Joe Maldonado, Adam Hanson, Ed Diemert, Clint Woods and the Chicago Heights Team. Chicago Heights would also like to extend a huge thank you to the Watco drivers from Glendale (AZ), St. Louis (MO), and Pittsburg (KS), that have worked away from their families and terminals to assist us: Robert Sua, Bob Powell, Brian Collier and John Nepote.”

Crane mats are used to support heavy equipment used in construction or as a structural roadway to provide passage over unstable ground, pipelines and more.

Chicago Heights Terminal welcomes new Customer Viking Mat

Toronto-based Viking Mat learned the Chicago Heights Terminal Team could handle and store crane mats.

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Watco short lines participate in Officer on a Train events

As part of U.S. Rail Safety Week, three Watco short lines hosted Officer on a Train events in conjunction with Operation Lifesaver to bring more awareness to rail crossing safety.

What transpires during these events is that an officer will board a locomotive with the train crew. That officer will then radio violations to officers on the ground and they will issue tickets or warnings to drivers and pedestrians as warranted.

The Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad (KO), Wisconsin & Southern Railroad (WSOR), and the Grand Elk Railroad (GDLK) all hosted events at their locations.

Lucas Conrad, manager of Safety and Training, said the event on the KO was very successful. “In just two hours there were 15 tickets issued at Seneca Street in Wichita, Kansas.

When starting the day, the group noticed that there were some kids on bikes trespassing on KO property so Brad Walker, manager of Safety and Operating Practices, Matt Vogt (KS Operation Lifesaver Board President), and Conrad walked them back across the tracks and talked to them about rail safety and why it is not ok to trespass on railroad property.

The WSOR hosted their Officer on a Train event between the Madison, Wisconsin yard and Middleton, Wisconsin. On board were members of the law enforcement communities of Madison Police Department, Dane County Sheriff’s Department, Wisconsin State Patrol, and Middleton Police Department. Also on board were members of the FRA, Wisconsin Operation Lifesaver, and Conductor Jacob Lipinski and Engineer Matthew Koser. The law enforcement officers made nine contacts with operators of motor vehicles that failed to follow laws regarding railroad property. The officers also made several contacts with pedestrians and trespassers that either failed to yield to the flashing lights, or were trespassing on railroad property.

The officers commented that they never expected to see as many infractions of the law as they did, and were grateful for the opportunity. Several officers stated that they will be more diligent around railroad property now that they have seen the concern first hand, and will continue to support our efforts in educating the public about safety around railroad property. The officers at the Grand Elk experienced five different traffic violations at the grade crossings and had two separate instances of trespassing while the officers were on site.

Pittsburg Team members get cancer patient covered

The Pittsburg Accounting Team was called together for a special meeting last month and it wasn’t good news. Fellow Team member Nancy Dickey had been diagnosed with breast cancer.

After a few tears were shed, her friends and teammates started to look for a way to help her out. Gwen Foster and Eva Rokezewski had heard Nancy say she was afraid of losing her hair because of her treatments. After asking a few other cancer patients what they thought would be a good choice, they found a scarf called the Abbey Cap that was highly recommended. They then sent an email to those in their department asking if they were interested in donating to purchase some of the hats for Nancy.

“It didn’t take long to travel out of our department. One person would send the email to someone who had said they wanted to help and so on. In just 10 minutes we had enough donated to purchase a hat for every day of the week,” said Foster.

The donations kept coming in and they were able to present Nancy with the hats and the extra funds to help pay for food, gas or anything else that she will be needing as she is fighting her battle with cancer.

There is also an army of Team members on stand-by waiting to help with meals, cleaning, or driving Nancy to appointments if needed.

“I had several people wanting to bring me meals,” said Nancy, “I don’t need that just yet, so this was really nice.”

Nancy’s fear was realized when she noticed that her hair began breaking off and then over one weekend, more and more started falling out. After church that Sunday she headed to her daughters house and had her get the clippers out.

“My granddaughter got tears in her eyes as I was getting my hair cut off,” said Nancy. “I told her it was ok, it’s just hair.”

Nancy was diagnosed with Stage 1 breast cancer and was told that the cancer she is battling is an aggressive one so she and her doctors are being aggressive as well. She will undergo 16 chemo treatments followed by surgery and then radiation.

October is Breast Cancer Awareness month so get your pink on and support Nancy and others who are battling this disease.
Two years ago Watco’s Pittsburg, Kansas, Team Safety & Improvement Committee held a Biggest Loser contest to encourage Team members to live healthier lifestyles.

And it worked for John Moriconi. Moriconi was a fairly new Team member working the IT Helpdesk when he entered the contest. “I lost 16% of my body weight during the contest and just kept with it,” said Moriconi. “So far I’ve lost a total of 135 pounds.” Moriconi said it’s the little things that make the big difference, like being able to bend down and tie his shoes or carrying in the groceries without getting winded.

Moriconi prefers to eat a low carb diet but does indulge in a cheat day here and there, which is usually spent at the local Chinese buffet.

With seven-year-old twins, Moriconi appreciates the extra energy he has to keep up with them. Miles and Maddox are also good about keeping their dad on the right track and will check to make sure the foods he is eating are allowed.

“It can get annoying sometimes,” laughed Moriconi. Being a single dad, Moriconi appreciates the help that he receives from his parents to get the time he needs to work out and get some alone time to regenerate.

Moriconi recently completed his first 5K and said he used an app for his phone called Couch to 5K to help him get in shape for the race.

“When I first started I couldn’t run around the block. I decided to do the 5K on June 1 and started training for the race that I ran on September 17.” Another item Moriconi recommends getting is a type of heart rate monitor or fitness tracker of some sort.

Once piece of advice Moriconi offers is that it’s never too late to turn things around. “At one time I’d pretty much resigned myself to a mobility scooter.” “You really can turn things around, you just need to be ready and you need to put some effort into it.”

Summer is a time for baseball, vacations, and fun but Watco University Director of Training and Development Cris Hatcher has been busy this summer collecting awards for Watco U programs and his own accomplishments in the training field.

For the second year in a row, Watco received the 2017 Learning! 100 Award at the Rank of #27. 'Those who received this award are commended for exhibiting well-developed learning cultures that improve performance, collaboration and innovation across the organization.

Hatcher traveled to San Diego, California, to the Learning! 100 Awards Dinner at the Enterprise Learning! Conference in August to accept the award.

Hatcher said, “We have the best Team Members in the business, and this award is a recognition of that and their dedication to improvement through learning and development. Receiving the award back-to-back shows the dedication that Watco has to continuous improvement, and ties back to the roots of Watco from day one and the continued growth of Watco, as we are committed to always providing a better solution to our Customers. In order to do so, we have to constantly learn, develop, and grow. Improvements in technology such as SuccessFactors, which houses Watco U Online, is going to allow for continued growth of our Team Members, and will provide on demand learning opportunities at their fingertips. I believe that programs like this will take Watco to the next level, and I hope they will drive us closer to the rank of #1!”

Back in April of this year, our online content provider BizLibrary, nominated Hatcher for the Emerging Star in Learning & Development Excellence Award with Brandon Hall Group. He received their Silver Excellence Award as an Emerging Star and will be accepting the award in at a conference being held in February 2018.

When attending the ALIGN Client Conference in September, Hatcher was recognized at their Award Ceremony as their Training Professional of the Year.

Rachael Peterson, senior vice president of People Services said, “I’m so proud of the recognition that Cris and the Watco U Team have received this year. The Watco U Team has done a great job of evolving and improving the program, as Watco’s training needs have changed. “Cris’ enthusiasm for training, desire to help our Team Members, and constant push to improve has been a key driver for Watco U’s success. I know that Cris has many innovative ideas to continue to improve Watco U, so I look forward to the future of the program. I know it’s going to just keep getting better.”

The South Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad Team celebrated the end of the Summer Spike program with a trip to the Safari Zoo in Caney, Kansas, and a picnic. There were approximately 115 Team members and their families who attended the event.

The group spent the day touring the zoo, holding the animals, and swimming. The zoo has a variety of animals such as tiger pups, lions, tigers, bears, primates, alligators, kangaroos, and ring-tailed lemurs and hyenas.

The highlight of the day was when they brought the reptiles out for the group to touch or hold. The bravest of the group were the youngest and several little girls draped the snake over their shoulders as if it were a feather boa. Apparently General Manager Jimmy Patterson disappeared when the snake was brought out.

Assistant General Manager Jerry Waun said the zoo is a great place to visit and they are constantly bringing in new animals and expanding. He also said that the guests at the zoo are always treated like family and that the owner always makes them all feel at home.

The Team will soon be getting ready for the Winter Freeze program, which will be here soon.
Junior Conductor joins Louisiana Southern Railroad

You normally have to be able to see over the hood of the locomotive to be a conductor but an exception was made in the case of seven-year-old Browlen Stickell.

Browlen has been a huge train fan since he was little and when a relative, who is a contractor for the Louisiana Southern Railroad (LAS), mentioned it to General Manager Blake Smith, he thought it would be fun to make a little boy’s dream come true.

When Browlen and his parents arrived at the LAS depot he was given his very own safety vest with his name embroidered on it by the wife of a LAS Team Member.

Browlen suffers from sensory issues but that didn’t stop him from blowing the horn as he sat in the seat of the locomotive. He got to ride the locomotive on the mechanical tracks and then he went on a by-rail ride on the LAS line with Track Inspector Judson (Juddy) Rogers.

Once he got back to the depot they had a pizza party and the Team gave him every kind of railroad item he could ever need.

“Just watching how excited he was made my day,” said Smith. “He loves anything trains. I gave him a calendar and he acted like it was gold. I was happy to be a part of making his day special.”

The Team even had a special Conductor certificate made up with Browlen’s name on it.

Louisiana Southern Railroad General Manager Blake Smith sits with Browlen Stickell, 7, who is now a honorary conductor for the railroad. Browlen was given his own safety vest with his name embroidered on it.
The Kanawha River Railroad helped re-enact President Woodrow Wilson’s Whistle Stop tour to Nitro, West Virginia, to celebrate the 100 year anniversary of the event.

President Wilson (portrayed by Jim Gearhart) and Edith Wilson (portrayed by Betsy Ely) rode into Nitro waving and smiling at the crowd just like they did many years ago.

The couple then were seated in a Model T Ford from that time period and rode to the city’s Living Memorial Park to kick off the annual festival.

KNWA General Manager Derrick Jackson said, “We were glad to be able to participate in this community event, it’s always fun to be a part of events celebrating the places we operate in.”

The celebration lasted from September 8 - September 11.