

Remote Control Resolution

Whereas, one of the primary goals of the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO is to help secure safe workplaces for Pennsylvania workers; and

Whereas, the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO is dedicated to the proposition that all citizens of Pennsylvania have a right to a safe environment, free from the hazards of the uncontrolled releases of hazardous materials (HAZMAT); and

Whereas, railroad companies that operate in Pennsylvania transport large amounts of hazardous chemicals (solids, liquids, gasses); and

Whereas, these dangerous chemicals are subject to uncontrolled releases and spillage when railroad cars carrying HAZMAT, are ruptured during derailments or collisions with other rolling stock; and

Whereas, the railroads operating in Pennsylvania have implemented remote control locomotive (RCL) operations in which unmanned locomotives will be used to switch railcars containing HAZMAT or switch cars on tracks adjacent to HAZMAT cars, occupied locomotives, and passenger trains; and

Whereas, in the United States, railroad companies have been allowed to implement these RCL operations without Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) regulations in spite of a request by the BLE to the FRA (November, 2000) and these railroad companies have failed to implement adequate training programs for remote control operations (RCO's); and

Whereas, these railroad companies have failed to adopt and/or enforce the operational practices most critical for employee and public safety recommended by the FRA Safety Advisory on remote control operations (February, 2000) and these railroad companies have failed to implement adequate training programs for remote control operations (RCO's); and

Whereas, more than forty (40) railroad accidents have occurred in RCL operations around the United States within the past two years, during hasty, unregulated implementation of RCL operations run by inadequately trained personnel resulting in serious derailments, property damage, HAZMAT release, personal injuries and death to employees;

Therefore Be It Resolved, that the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO calls upon the State of Pennsylvania to prohibit the use of RCL technology in switching operations until such time as:

(1) A through risk assessment study of RCL operations has been made and published by a third party, (2) An FRA regulation governing RCL operations is promulgated; (3) The railroad companies in Pennsylvania give proper notice to all city, county, municipal and State Emergency Planning Committees of their RCL operations and specify the locations where those operations will take place.

Be It Finally Resolved, that the officers of the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO will write a letter to Allan Rutter, FRA Administrator, calling on him to reopen FRA Docket No. 2000-8422, recommending the study of RCL operations as requested by the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, so that railroad employees, citizens, and communities which may be affected can register their concerns about the safety of railroad operations in their neighborhoods.

Submitted by: Pennsylvania AFL-CIO Executive Council