


Transportation Division
GENERAL COMMITTEE GO-513

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August 22, 2017

Cindy Sanborn
CSXT Chief Operating Officer – Executive Vice President
500 Water St.
Jacksonville, Florida 32216

RE: Unsafe Conditions due to Operations leads to severe Injury

Ms. Sanborn,

The SMART-TD Organization had a member and trainman for CSX in Nashville Radnor Yard who was seriously injured yesterday about 1330 central time and during the totality of the eclipse. Brother Barber 253716 was working as a foreman on the Y103 job and Brother Beddingfield as his switchman. This job was switching on the 3 Throat lead while another crew, Y101, was switching on the adjacent 4 Throat lead.

Our office just learned yesterday that these two crews were switching side by side on two separate leads and on different radio channels. This all started when the decision was made to stop flat switching at C yard due to the high rate of speed of the cars rolling into the tracks and crews reporting concerns with possible derailments from the impact. I had discussed this matter with Mr. Swafford and Labor Relations. Apparently when the decision was made to stop switching at C Yard, the switching was moved to one of the Throat leads. There was already a regular assignment switching on one of the leads. These leads involve an uphill movement where the engineers must get the engines up to 7 or 8 throttle to move up the hill and by the time the cut is rolling and the slack is running out, the trainman pulling the pins is basically running around 6 or 7 miles per hour sometimes. It has been nearly impossible to pull the pins at a walking speed per the rules due to the terrain. And the crew switching on the 3 Throat lead has to be in the middle of the two tracks to pull pins.

The crews have advised management of their concerns in switching on two separate leads right beside each other if something happened. The engineers have to get a hard kick with the engines to get the cars into the proper tracks since the track infrastructure is not made for flat switching. This has never been a safe method to flat switching on a constant basis. It is apparent the close proximity of these two jobs kicking besides each other was not a safe environment.

Furthermore, Brother Barber's switchman on the job, Brother Beddingfield 261857, and the other crews on duty state that the crews were never given any instructions on having lights during the eclipse nor to stop operations for a few minutes during this dark period of the eclipse. It is apparent the close proximity of these two jobs kicking besides each other was not a safe environment. The dark period lasted about 2 minutes. While it is still unclear how the car being kicked by the other crew on 4 Throat snagged and drug Brother Barber and caused the severe injuries to him, it should have never happened if there was a genuine concern for safety.

Now we have an employee that has forever had his life altered due to the emphasis on production over safety.

This office has documented many of our concerns for the lack of a safety culture and disregard for safety rules in place. The push, push, push, rush, rush, rush, environment created by the current managers is a direct result of this very tragic incident. This office has advised CSX Upper management and Labor Relations of the trainmasters at Radnor screaming at employees for taking lunch or taking a heat break. One manager screamed at the crew for wasting 7 minutes for checking a switch list. The employees have been threatened with being taken out of service and told they would never come back to work for taking too long to eat lunch or switch a cut. Some employees have been taken out of service for not working to satisfy a manager. The employees have been charged for not meeting performance expectations when no one can even explain to the employees the expectations. The employees have been scared of losing their jobs by these overzealous managers brought in from the CN. Because of these tactics the employees have had to abandon rules compliance and comply with the instructions given by these managers. Even had one employee suffer heat exhaustion due to fear of stopping long enough to have a heat break and drink some water.

Yet when this tragic event happened to Brother Barber, and the other crew members were rushing to his aid and constantly trying to call the Radnor Tower to get help and call 911, there was no one answering. One of the crew members had to run to a nearby shack to retrieve a first aid kit to aid Brother Barber and still no answer from the tower or management with CSX. The road crews heard the transmissions for help and tried calling the tower themselves with no response. The dispatcher heard the road crews calling for help over the radios and tried calling the tower at Radnor with no response.

Why? Because the entire group of managers and yardmasters were outside watching the eclipse. The very managers that have berated crews for wasting 7 minutes checking a switch list or taking 10 extra minutes to return from lunch due to a bathroom break, were all outside doing something else and no one was in place to handle any emergencies.

Since CSX has abandoned a mutual safety culture with the Organizations and the employees no longer have safety committees that their Locals are involved in with the local management team, there is a disconnect in addressing safety concerns and working together to prevent unsafe operations and conditions.

It is very telling of the culture and mindset of CSX management now based on comments made by a manager yesterday. A second shift crew that had been early to work and experienced part of the scene involving their fellow injured employee, advised they had to go home at their lunch break due to not being in the right frame of mind. One manager was going to allow the crew to leave and get some rest but his boss stated “these guys are not going to take advantage of an employee getting hurt to get out of work”.

CSX used to be proud to support and live by their Code of Ethics and a safety slogan that stated “No Job is so Important, No Service is so Urgent That We Cannot Take Time to Perform all Work Safely”. Neither seems to be a priority any more when it concerns the treatment of employees and operations. When there was a mutual safety program between the Carrier and the Organization, our T&E crews were the safest in the industry. Our local safety committees addressed unsafe practices, operations and conditions. Safety was a priority first and then operations. But that is no longer the case. The crews are expected to work 12 hours every shift and quality of life is no longer a consideration.

The majority of the SMART-TD General Chairman on CSX attended a meeting on Friday, August 18, 2017 at CSX Headquarters on 500 Water Street at 1400 to address many issues ongoing at this moment on CSX. We met with the Labor Relations team and the Crew management Team and expected both Mr. Swafford and yourself to be in attendance. But neither was available due to being in a conference with Mr. Hunter Harrison. Even though the Organization represents the bulk of the manpower on CSX and we had addressed issues with a recent letter from Mr. Harrison to the media, no one from upper management was in attendance other than Labor Relations and Crew Management. The Organization brought to light many of these contributing issues in this tragic event. The inner company memo that stressed to managers to basically hound the employees in and out of their meal period was discussed at length. The Organization discussed many important matters concerning the operations and blatant disregard for the agreements. We were promised the issues would all be reviewed and discussed with Mr. Swafford and yourself. We were told that Labor Relations would reach out to the field to address the meal period issues and manner in which the employees were being treated. I can only assume that process has yet to begin.

This office can no longer accept such intolerance for our safety, the rules and the agreements. We have seen an increase in injuries and derailments while our members continue to operate as professional railroaders and performing duties with an infrastructure not designed for the work. Even with the intimidation and harassment, our members strive to perform for our customers. But morale and pride in our company is at an all-time low.

With the lack of a clear management structure, our Local Chairmen have had no one to address the safety issues, rule issues or operational issues. Without a mutual safety culture, disregard for agreement provisions and the push for production, the employees are being expected to disregard the rules and rush to get the work done.

I hereby request an immediate meeting to discuss how this Company intends to handle our safety and well-being and how safety concerns will be addressed. We cannot have any more members injured or killed for the sake of a dollar or 5 minutes.

Our office is available.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dale Barnett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "D" and "B".

Dale Barnett

General Chairman – GO-513

CC: John Previsich, SMART-TD President
Kevin Brodar, SMART-TD Legal Counsel
Jeremy Ferguson, SMART-TD Vice President
John Lesniewski, SMART-TD Vice President
David Weir, SMART-TD Vice President
John Risch, SMART-TD National Legislative Director
Steve Mavity, SMART-TD General Chairman GO-049
John Whitaker, SMART-TD General Chairman GO-851
James Darby, SMART-TD General Chairman LO-762
Travis Raynes, SMART-TD General Chairman GO-201
Zach Jones, CSXT Vice President Labor Relations
Jermaine Swafford, CSX Chief Transportation Officer, Senior Vice President
Rod Logan, CSXT Vice President of Safety