

TEAMSTERS NEWS

International Brotherhood of Teamsters
25 Louisiana Avenue, NW • Washington, DC 20001 • www.teamster.org 202-624-6911 • fax: 202-624-6918

For Immediate Release
July 22, 2004

Contact: Galen Munroe
(202) 624-6911
John Bentley
(216) 241-2630 ext. 248

UNION PACIFIC CRASH RENEWS DEBATE ON REMOTE CONTROL TECHNOLOGY

Teamster Rail Workers Point to Unregulated Technology, Lack of Training and Oversight as Causes of Accident

(Washington, DC) -- A July 9 Union Pacific accident in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, underscores a number of dangers the Federal Railroad Administration has ignored despite repeated warnings by the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET), a division of the Teamsters' Rail Conference.

The Union Pacific crash happened when locomotives operated by unregulated remote control technology went through a control point on the Jonesboro Subdivision, crashing into the side of a freight train on the mainline track that was carrying hazardous materials. Eleven cars were derailed on the mainline.

The remote control unit was pulling more than 100 cars and was operated by two junior employees, both of whom were hired in early 2004.

According to reports, Union Pacific did not originally report this accident to the National Transportation Safety Board as a remote control accident. Nor was remote control involvement reported to the local newspaper, which carried a story on the incident.

Alarming, failsafe devices that were in place to prevent this type of accident from happening were purposely overridden. According to reports, Union Pacific management disabled the devices — designed to prevent remote control locomotives from entering mainline track — because they slowed train movements and reduced productivity.

The accident happened in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, where the City Council passed a safety resolution seeking to ban remote control train operations in February of 2003. Pine Bluff, one of the first of more than 60 communities across the country

-more-

PAGE 2/ UNION PACIFIC CRASH RENEWS DEBATE ON REMOTE CONTROL TECHNOLOGY

that have passed similar resolutions, was ignored by Union Pacific, which chose instead to put profits before safety.

"The railroads, which are the nation's largest carrier of hazardous materials, continue to take shortcuts with training employees, properly manning locomotives, and implementing needed safety precautions," said Don M. Hahs, National President of the BLET, a division of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters' Rail Conference, "I hope it doesn't take a catastrophe for someone to pay attention."