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Docket #21465

STATE OF WASH.  
UTIL. AND TRANSP.  
COMMISSION  
Ms. Marilyn Showalter  
Chairwomen

Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission  
1300 S. Evergreen Park Drive SW.  
Olympia, WA. 98504-7250

John Lawson  
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Dear Ms. Showalter

I'm writing this letter to urge you to ban remote control train operation. (RCO) in the state of Washington. I'm concerned that the Burlington northern Santa Fe railroad is going to use the state of Washington as a laboratory to test this unproved technology. The railroads are quick to point to the Canadian National Railroad as haven proven there effectiveness. One should also consider the C.N.R.R. are also the company behind Canac the producers of the RCO device being used on the BNSF. I would liken this to believing your new car is a great deal because the car salesman told you it is.

The truth about RCO technology is the promises of huge cost savings by the elimination of 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of operating personnel on each train; Thus hire stock prices and in turn bigger bonuses for upper management.

The rest of the truth about RCO Technology from the upper management perspective is when and if it doesn't live up to its promises. The people responsible will have long since taken their bonuses, cashed out their stock options and left the company in the hands of persons who will not be responsible for the past decisions of the company.

Unfortunately the issues of responsibility are usually taken up after disaster strikes. When there will be damages to pay for and bodies to bury

I'm an engineer working for the BNSF Railroad. I've been trained to strict standards set down by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). These standard oversee my moral character (DWI or Drug charges) my health standards and my minim technical knowledge. I'm concerned there are no such minim standards set or regulated for RCO's by any state, federal

or city agencies. In fact the FRA has only made general Recommendations originally intended for study groups with small scale tests in mind.

I would like to address the misconception that the only reason that the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers.(BLE) or engineers in general are pressing for this ban is to protect their jobs. This misunderstanding comes from the belief that when the engineer is removed from the cab of locomotives he or she will be on the street without a job. In fact only a very small number of the oldest engineers do not come from and retain seniority in other operating crafts. Most engineers were selected from the ranks of Trainmen.(Switchmen, Brakemen, Conductors, and Hosslers) and were trained as Engineers per federal guidelines. Simply put ,when I can't work as an engineer I will exercise my seniority and work as a trainmen for about the same pay.

This misconception does provide a strong tool to play down the value of advice given by engineers with ten, twenty, and even thirty years experience.


In march I will have been promoted and working as an engineer for ten years and April will be fourteen years I have worked for the railroad. I am concerned that RCO's are deign implemented to quickly without adequate time to study or regulate there use. The railroads are going to implement RCO's as quickly as they can wile the political environment in Washington DC. is favorable to their cause . Then take their profits and run, and let the chips land where they may.

I have a wife and two children and I live less than a mile from the tracks in kennewick WA. It is a little more than a mile to the switch yard at Finley. Finley middle School and High school are about a quarter mile from the yard. Sooner or later if not stopped RCO's will come to the industry switcher at finely. That switcher primarily services the agricultural chemical plants around Finely handling large quantities of chemicals in tank cars. Finely is not an isolated case. Ochoa middle school is less than one mile from BNSF's Pasco yard and down wind. This condition is similar in many places around the state and is recipe for disaster.

Please ban the use of remote control trains in the State of Washington. A ban can always be repealed later if necessary but by taking the safe course of action now you can protect us from mistakes that cant be repealed; Such as the loss of life.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If I can be of any help please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

  
John P. Lawson

3/23/03