

January 30, 2003

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

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CHAIR, WUTC

RE: Docket #TR-021465

Dear Ms. Showalter,

I am a locomotive engineer working in Tacoma Washington. I am concerned about the use of "Remote Controlled Locomotives" in railroad operations. I know first hand the hazards this technology introduces to our communities. I encounter near misses with automobiles and trucks almost on a daily basis. I have been able to prevent many collisions because I can see from my position in the locomotive cab that vehicles are not going to stop and I apply emergency train brakes avoiding impacts with these vehicles. I also know that the Federal Railroad Administration has failed to effectively regulate the use of remote control technology to protect the public or railroad workers.

As you must be aware on August 6, 2002, the Puget Sound and Pacific (PSAP) railroad while operating a train using remote control caused a crossing accident in Shelton, Washington. The RC locomotive got away from the operator and ran several miles out of control downhill without anyone on board, and collided with a tractor-trailer on a crossing in downtown Shelton. The PSAP is not alone using remote control technology. The BNSF, and soon the UPRR, will use remote control in Washington.

Numerous accidents have occurred in Washington and across the United States by railroads using remote control technology. The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers has documented many accidents with remote control technology. These accidents have caused worker injuries, release of hazardous materials, and risks to public safety. I believe that action is necessary immediately to stem the risk that railroads are bringing to Washington communities.

I ask that you support the efforts of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers to bring regulation of railroad remote control technology to Washington State. Please help to make our public and our states railroaders safer with strong regulation.

Respectfully,


M. J. Robertson

3710 Waller Rd. E.

Tacoma, WA 98443-1616