

WPRM Safety Department News – Sept 2014

—Tom Carter, Director, Safety Officer

Recently, as our new Safety Officer, I took an extensive tour of the shop and grounds with Director Vicknair and was extremely discouraged by what I found in regards to fire hazards and general shop cleanliness. As a result and with Board approval, we have appointed David “Fritz” Elems as the Shop Safety Officer to assist me in getting the shop in a safe condition again.

The issues we discovered have been remediated and an extensive clean up of the shop is currently happening. President McClure and Vice President Habeck have been busy cleaning and organizing and discarding old junk laying around, eliminating several hazards. Director Vicknair and I have thoroughly cleaned, reorganized and re-set the Wood Shop so it can not only be productively used, it can be done so safely. New signage is going up, procedures are being adjusted and a few new ones will be added if necessary. This is being done with a very limited budget and on a volunteer basis; however, with your help and cooperation as members and volunteers, together, we can keep improving the safety culture at the museum.

In addition to the usual safety concerns of a shop like ours comes an additional concern for the safety of the facilities and the equipment. Currently, we are undertaking one of our most ambitious facilities improvement projects to date: Our new perimeter fence. It is a standard chain link constructed fence with new access gates and encompasses our entire property. This is to mitigate liability concerns with several of the locals using our property as a motocross track, dog park, and just plain theft and vandalism that we have experienced lately.

The “Silver Debris” volunteer lounge car recently had one of its doors smashed in by a burglar, causing several hundred dollars in damages. This, we as a society, are stuck paying for. One thief was even so brazen; he had the audacity to simply hook a piece of rail to his truck and attempt to drive off dragging it before

being caught by one of our vigilant volunteers. Switch stands have disappeared as well as dozens of supplies from our lay-down yard, some, ironically, that we had been collecting for the fence. Considering how we lost the hospital to an act of arson, and how many other museums and shortline railroads have been hit with copper traction motor cable thefts as well as thefts of horns and vandalism to equipment, the time has come to protect ourselves, our property and our collection.

Since a large moat full of alligators was far too expensive, the machine gun nests and checkpoints had far too many liability concerns, and the small fleet of surplus military vehicles was vetoed by the “Fun Police”, the fence was the logical answer. On behalf of the Board, I’d like to thank Director Eugene Vicknair and Director Kirk Baer for supervising the crew from the California Conservation Corps who spent several days working on the fence, drilling holes for and setting the posts in concrete. We’re currently planning the remainder of the work to get the fence finished and will keep you apprised of progress.

As I mentioned in the last Trainsheet, safety doesn’t just extend to the museum and your place of employment, but, at home as well. When the weather changes and summer comes to a close, I tend to go into “deep cleaning mode”. Alicia loves it. As nice as it is to have a clean house (and in my case a clean and organized garage as well), it makes for a much safer living space. Keeps this in mind next time you are procrastinating cleaning the house or garage. You’re not only making it more pleasant and appealing, you’re making it safer.

Recently, an old high school buddy I keep in touch with via Facebook had a major house fire. He was awoken at 2am to the sound of smoke alarms. Immediately smelling smoke, he jumped out of bed, woke his wife and grabbed the kids as they safely evacuated the house. He had just changed the batteries in his smoke detector a few days prior at the suggestion of his young son. It seems his elementary school had a visit by the fire department at an assembly and

he came home and inquired about the status of the family's fire protection plan and the smoke detectors. He's 8 years old. You are never too young to learn safe practices and never too old to take suggestions for safety from anybody. This suggestion for Dad to check the batteries in the smoke detectors probably saved his family's life. Thankfully, the fire was mostly contained to the garage with severe smoke and water damage to the rest of the home, thanks to stringent Indiana building fire codes; the home being fairly new was equipped with a fire resistant bulkhead between the garage and the rest of the house. Regardless, smoke inhalation is the number one killer and cause of injury in house fires, and Matt attributes the smoke detector with preventing that kind of tragedy. Check your detectors folks, check them at least once a month and if there is any doubt as to their age, reliability or operation, replace it! Smoke detectors are inexpensive, not

that you would want to put a value on your family's lives anyway.

Summer is, unfortunately coming to a rapid close as I write this. This always "bums me out" as it is my favorite time of year. Regardless, the weather is changing, temperatures are dropping (unless you live south of the Equator, lucky you!), and for a lot of you, this means snow, especially at the museum, so be careful, stay warm, take care of yourselves and we hope to see you and yours at "Santa Train" this Holiday Season.



Greg Elems explains the efforts of volunteers doing track work to the photographer on 10 May, 2014. The ties under the switch frog are being raised and tamped to correct settling that has occurred over time. Pictured left to right: Rick Gruninger, Matt Elems, Greg Elems, Duane Vander Veen.

—Dave Morton Photo