



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 25, 2005

CONTACT: Michael Buckley
202/628-9262
202/262-3854
MichaelB@ttd.org

Giant Railroads Paint Rosy -- and Misleading -- Picture of Safety Record *Self-Awarded Prizes, PR Campaign Mask the Dangerous Truth*

Washington DC -- The freight railroad industry paints a highly selective and distorted picture of its own safety record, Edward Wytkind, President of the AFL-CIO's Transportation Trades Department (TTD), said today.

Wytkind's remarks came on the heels of a gala ceremony in Washington held by the Association of American Railroads to honor the winners of the industry's self-awarded Harriman prizes for safety. Rail workers and their unions, who cite management pressure to under-report accidents and injuries, have fought unsuccessfully to change the Harriman methodology to ensure the award truly recognizes safe rail operations.

"This 'every day is a sunny day' self-portrait masks what the industry doesn't want the public and our elected officials to know. It does a shameful disservice to the pain and suffering of those who work for or live near freight railroads," Wytkind said.

What the rail industry doesn't want you to know:

- 896 people were killed in railroad accidents in 2004;
- Ten people died and 5,400 residents of Graniteville, SC were forced to evacuate a January 2005 crash of Norfolk Southern chlorine tanker cars (fortunately for the railroad, which won the Harriman Gold Medal, the accident took place six days after the cut-off for this year's prize);
- Bronze-Medal winning Union Pacific tried to outsource its train inspections to Mexico -- at a time when the railroad was mired in a series of deadly chemical accidents near San Antonio;
- A Pulitzer-Prize winning investigation by the New York Times documented how the major railroads lose or destroy evidence from accidents and use powerful political connections to shirk their responsibility;
- Rail workers are routinely harassed and intimidated to not report safety risks; and
- Major railroad corporations have been able to stonewall Congress for over a decade from adopting rail safety legislation and, since 9/11, security reforms.

"Our nation's giant railroads are incapable of policing themselves," Wytkind said, adding, "Congress and the White House must step in and hold the railroad industry to a higher standard of safety."

TTD has endorsed a doubling of federal rail inspectors, stronger whistle-blower protections for workers, limits on use of remote control technologies, initiatives to address a chronic worker fatigue crisis, stronger employee training mandates, and an end to "dark territories" in which there are no track signal systems.

TTD represents 35 member unions in the rail, aviation, transit, trucking, highway, longshore, maritime and related industries. For more information, visit www.ttd.org.

Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

888 16th Street, NW • Suite 650 • Washington, DC 20006 • tel: 202.628-9262 • fax: 202.628.0391 • www.ttd.org
Edward Wytkind, President • Michael A. Ingrao, Secretary-Treasurer

