BNSF says SAFETY is their #1 Priority – BUT IS IT???

BNSF says it wants to “modernize” the BMWED Safety Agreement by reducing the current 43 BMWED appointed Safety Assistant and Bridge Worker Safety Facilitator positions to a maximum of 19 bridge and track positions. And, it wants to control who is assigned to the remaining 19 Safety Assistant/Bridge Safety Worker positions. (management pick).

As you may know, the BMWED/BNSF Safety Agreement has been in place since 1997. Under the Agreement BNSF has achieved the best Safety record in the history of the Company for BMWED Members. That means more and more of us go home every day safe and in one piece. Now, BNSF wants to do away with that success and go back to the "old way."

Before the Agreement, Management blamed the employees for every injury and disciplined any employee who reported an injury. Before the Agreement, no BMWE Member would participate in any Safety position or program until/unless our participation was covered by an Agreement. Together with hard work and Solidarity, we reached a Safety Agreement bringing BMWED Members back into an employee based safety program, by written Agreement! Now, 20 plus years later BNSF wants to go backwards, in the name of “modernizing.”

Our current Safety Assistants and Bridge Worker Safety Facilitators work closely with BMWED Membership to ensure we are all following the required safety procedures, they help us get answers to safety questions, get required PPE, get required safety training, ensuring the safety training records are accurate, they help us understand all the elements of audits so we keep everything up to date, and, they give us an opportunity to share safety concerns with a trusted “one of our own” not just another Company Officer.

Previous BNSF Management praised the BMWED Safety Agreement and thanked BMWED for its contribution to a safe workplace and a very valuable and successful Safety program. But, apparently the desire for more profit and control has suddenly changed all that.

Since the beginning of the 1997 BMWE Safety Agreement the number of Company Operating Divisions have been reduced, our Seniority Districts were merged and reduced from 42 Districts to 9. But, the miles we travel and the “size of the railroad” has actually grown given the expansive increase in rail traffic, placing more demands on the right-of-way, all of which translates into much more Company profit.

As you well know, our territories are huge. Safety Assistants and Bridge Worker Safety Facilitators were added over time under the Agreement to serve our Members on these multi-Roadmaster huge geographic areas. Safety Assistants and Bridge Worker Safety Facilitator’s were added under the Agreement in these
huge territories because local management liked the employee based Safety program and felt the need to have more Safety positions on their territories. It wasn’t BMWED asking for more Safety positions it was Local Division Management that needed and wanted to make this Safety program the success it has become! New management now thinks the successful program should be less, much less!

We believe that the BMWED Safety Agreement and the Union appointed Safety positions are invaluable to our Membership. They are a driving force to the creation of a safe work place. BNSF’s desire to cut the Safety positions and make them “management pick” is not in line with the “slogan” they tell us that “safety is number 1.”

First the Company cuts track inspection frequency to replace it with unmanned Geo car inspection. Next it eliminates “key routes” that had more frequent manned track inspection. And now, it wants to gut the employee based Safety program. The handwriting is on the wall and becoming clear. Our fear that profit really does mean more than safety appears real. Together we must fight this reckless corporate greed. It’s dangerous to the employees and dangerous to the Public. Shame!

BMWED is working hard to change the course being pursued by BNSF Management and save our current employee based Safety program and positions. But, management appears emboldened to get its way or destroy our success. If we are not able to change the Company’s dangerous course, we will be looking to take the steps necessary to change this destructive culture. It is clear that the current employee based safety agreement has worked and we should not stand idly by while management attempts to destroy it.

We need your help. If you believe our current employee based Safety Agreement and Union appointed Safety positions are a positive component to our Safety, and you do not want your workplace safety diminished, you must get involved by standing up! PLEASE contact your Division Management, your GDLM, your ADMP, your Roadmaster or the BNSF Executive management in Fort Worth, Texas and tell them to STOP dismantling our BMWED Safety Program. If you need contact information, please look at the BNSF on-line phone directory or call one of the System Officers for assistance in obtaining the contact info. It is imperative. Save our Safety, do it right away!!!

In Solidarity and in Safety!

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