

# The Track Car

*The Official Newsletter of West Coast Railroaders Group*



## **Upcoming WCRG Events:**

### **Track Car Excursion :**

Roaring Camp Railroads  
March 29th, 2020

### **Vintage Track Car Rides:**

Roaring Camp Railroads  
May 16th and 17th 2020  
Fundraiser for Make-A-Wish  
Greater Bay Area

### **Track Car Excursion:**

Virginia & Truckee Railroad  
June 19th-21st 2020  
Fundraiser for Honor Flight  
Nevada

### **Track Car Excursion:**

Nevada Southern Railway  
October 24th and 25th, 2020



## **President's Message**

Welcome to our newsletter! As we turn the page to a new year and a new decade, it's hard to believe 2019 went by so fast! For WCRG, 2019 was another safe and successful year. Operating thousands of track miles without injury or incident is no easy task. I'm exceptionally proud of all our operators.

Moving into 2020, WCRG will continue to focus on safety, including our new campaign to educate motorcar excursion participants regarding the dangers of drug and alcohol use during excursions. With the wide acceptance and legalization of recreational marijuana, excursion participants must understand that legal does not mean marijuana is OK (or any controlled substance) during a WCRG excursion.

I look forward to leading WCRG into 2020, as well as Tim Broughton and Matt Parker, as we continue to be the safest and most efficient track car organization in the west.

See you on the rails,

Ken Marty

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## Meet Matt Parker, Manager of Operating Practices, Northern Region



Manager Parker Obtaining Authority to Proceed on WCRG 5602

Matt Parker, WCRG's Manager of Operating Practices Northern Region loves what he does. As a career railroader, Matt understands safety is always the first importance of duty in any service or job WCRG performs. Whether it's climbing on a Locomotive, or climbing on a track car, the same challenges are present-operating safely and efficiently while complying with the rules of the railroad.

As WCRG's Manager of Operating Practices, Matt is responsible for the safe and efficient operation of our services to our host railroads. That can be anything from an efficiency test on our qualified operators, to piloting a motorcar excursion over our host railroads.

Matt especially enjoys working with the Make-A-Wish Foundation, planning and ensuring railroad events that involve children are handled in a safe environment for everyone involved. Matt also enjoys getting on the rails of our host railroad the Virginia & Truckee, providing fire patrol behind historic steam trains. Thank you for your service Matt!

## WCRG's 2020 Excursion Participant Drug and Alcohol Awareness Campaign Aims to Educate Excursion Participants on the Dangers of Impairment During WCRG Excursions



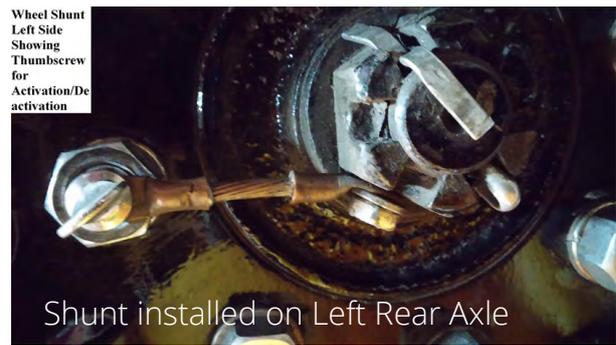
WCRG's drug and alcohol awareness campaign for motorcar excursion participants for 2020 is in full swing. With the wide acceptance of recreational Marijuana use in today's society, coupled with mass legalization in many States including California and Nevada, WCRG has taken the lead in educating motorcar excursion participants that just because recreational Marijuana is legal, that does not make Marijuana, or any other controlled substance acceptable to use when operating on a WCRG motorcar excursion.

It is also important to understand that alcohol use is also not acceptable. Excursion participants must not have any measurable alcohol in their system during any WCRG excursion. Although motorcar excursion participants are generally not in safety sensitive positions, operating a motorcar on a railroad track still poses a safety risk when impaired.

WCRG intends to make it perfectly clear that drug and/ alcohol use will not be tolerated on any excursion. In the coming months WCRG will be talking with excursion participants, as well as distributing our new motorcar excursion participant drug and alcohol awareness flyer. Excursion participants will see this flyer in every excursion itinerary package, as well as on our social media platforms. Let's keep excursions in 2020 drug and alcohol free.

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## Shunting for Automatic Warning Device Activation



WCRG requires all on track equipment to shunt track circuits for automatic warning device activation. Shunting makes motorcar excursion operations safer. Fairmont and other manufacturers engineered their motorcars to be insulated for the then current railroad operating practices of that era. Just as railroad operating practices have greatly improved from the time these motorcars were built, so has railway signaling technology allowing motorcars to take advantage of shunting for automatic warning device activation.

Decades ago motorcars were the primary mode of transportation for maintenance of way employees. Often motorcars would run ahead of trains in signaled territory. Motorcar operator's would run on a track car lineup-a list of trains operating on a segment of track with an expected time at a station. Motorcars needed to be insulated to prevent wayside signals from displaying stop indications behind the motorcar. It was not uncommon for a train to be one signal away from the motorcar. In fact many railroad men were killed misjudging how close the approaching train actually was. If a track car operator misjudged or misinterpreted the lineup he could be struck and killed in these situations.

Another reason motorcars were originally insulated was for signal testing and maintenance. Signal maintainers could not test the signal system with a motorcar shunting the track. It's important to remember that motorcar manufacturers never envisioned people would use motorcars for excursion purposes.

The use of track shunts to activate automatic warning devices is a simple and reliable device, attached from the rear axle nut to wheel bolt. WCRG has done extensive research and field testing over many railroads with this shunting setup. WCRG excursion participants will tell you just how reliable this system is, and how much safer they feel operating on shunted excursions.

Excursions benefit by having all motorcars shunted to protect not only the individual excursion participant, but also the general public. Excursion participants simply bunch up their motorcars before the crossing circuit, and everyone goes through as a tight group. With the automatic warning devices activated, motor vehicles and pedestrians are alerted that rail traffic is approaching or present at the crossing.

Allowing any excursion participant to proceed through a crossing equipped with in service automatic warning devices, without activating the devices, amounts to purposely disabling a safety device. On railroads that need additional protection due to rusty rail, grease, etc. shunt cables, key starts, mobile decoder boxes, and other means of activation can be utilized. Shunting and using the automatic warning devices makes excursions safer for the excursion group as well as the general public.

## 9-1-1 Two Way Radio Emergency Calls Make Excursions Safer



Most people are familiar with 9-1-1 service for emergencies on landline and cellular telephones. Did you know that many railroads also utilize the same 9-1-1 system for emergencies on railroad radio systems? When a train or railroad employee experiences an emergency situation 9-1-1 is "toned" up via DTMF (Dual-Tone Multi-Frequency) on the radio channel for the designated territory. This tone generally goes to a central dispatch center, and is immediately answered by a dispatcher or other designated employee. If you monitor local railroad radio channels in your area, you may hear the 9-1-1 tone followed by emergency-emergency-emergency followed by a dispatcher answering the emergency call.

Broadcasting emergency over the radio three times is the standard protocol on railroads when emergencies exist. During this time, employees must give priority to communications involving the incident in question while the incident is active. This system of emergency notification can also be utilized on motorcar excursions. WCRG has equipped mobile radios on track cars to receive "emergency call" alarms on WCRG radio channels 1, 2, and 3. This simple system allows excursion participants to "tone" 9-1-1 over the radio if an emergency exists at any time during the excursion. WCRG track car radios will then sound an audible alarm to alert the employee in charge that an emergency call has been received, and the employee in charge will immediately respond.

This system leads to faster response times that are crucial in any emergency situation. In one hypothetical scenario, the excursion group may be holding in a sliding at lunch, when suddenly an excursion participant experiences chest pain. Instead of having to look for the employee in charge, or waste time trying to figure out who can help them, they can simply tone 9-1-1. The alarm will immediately get the attention of the employee in charge, who will summon help.

It's important to understand this system only works when excursion participants radios are equipped with DTMF capabilities. Most modern two way radios are easily equipped with DTMF, generally by simply replacing the microphone with a DTMF microphone. Generally no radio programming is required. WCRG will be discussing this important feature with excursion participants in upcoming job briefings of the importance of DTMF capabilities. WCRG will eventually require all excursion participant's track cars to be DTMF equipped to take full advantage of this system in the future, as WCRG continues to embrace new technology to enhance the safety of motorcar excursions.

## Virginia & Truckee Make-A-Wish Fundraiser Excursion June 14th-16th 2019



Group Photo Stop at Milepost 12



Photo Stop at Gold Hill

WCRG's June Virginia & Truckee excursion was another fast paced, exciting excursion held on Father's Day weekend, June 2019. A sold out excursion with excursion participants coming from Southern, Central and Northern California, as well as Southern and Northern Nevada. This particular excursion was a fundraiser for the Make-A-Wish Foundation. Make-A-Wish grant's wishes to children with life threatening illnesses. WCRG and the Virginia & Truckee railroad have been involved with the Make-A-Wish Foundation for several years. The excursion started out with a test and tune run down from Virginia City to Overman Pit and return Friday Evening, followed by a Pizza meet and greet after tie up Friday night.

Saturday morning the excursion group rolled out of Virginia City at 8:00 AM, behind the steam train to Eastgate. At Eastgate the motorcar group turned and staged behind the steam train to Virginia City. At 10:00 AM sharp, Engine 29 whistled off for departure. The excursion group got under way about 5 minutes behind the train. Just out of tunnel two, the excursion group caught up with the train as it rounded a horseshoe curve before Scales. Scales was a stop on the railroad that weighed railcars as they left Virginia City. The train now stops at Scales for lubrication and narration of the Valley below the tracks known as American Flats. As the excursion group stops at Scales behind the train, excursion participants have an opportunity to take photos of the excursion group and the surrounding Valley.

With all the motorcar engines off the only sound is the historic steam engine pumping air and the occasional boiler safety valve lifting of its seat blowing steam out the top of the boiler. A few minutes later the train is again rolling and so is the excursion group. As the excursion group proceeds up the steep grades of the Virginia & Truckee, the group reaches Gold Hill. At Gold Hill, the railroad reaches 3.6 percent around the tunnel 3 shoofly. A few minutes later the excursion group rolls through tunnel 4 and around the curve into the historic mining town of Virginia City and into the locomotive servicing facility for lunch. After lunch the excursion group departed right behind the 3:00 PM Carson train, once again lead by the Virginia & Truckee Engine 29. As the train proceeded down hill, the excursion group stopped at Donovan for a photo stop of the train descending through the Canyon before going into tunnel two.

With the excursion group under way again, next stop was Eastgate, where the cars were turned. After a brief potty stop, the employee in charge obtained authority to proceed from Eastgate to Virginia City, and the excursion group once again was on the move. Upon arriving at Virginia City, the excursion group was secured for the night at the historic depot. Excursion participants were then invited to a BBQ dinner for excursion participants and guests. Sunday's trip was a repeat of Saturday, with the exception of two more photo stops. The first stop at Milepost 12 with all excursion participants lined up next to the lead pilot car for a group photo. The second photo stop was in front of the historic Gold Hill depot, with all the cars stopped just short of the crossing. Setoff was smooth, with everyone on their way home before 7:00 PM. Another spectacular three days of operating on some of the best rails and views the west had to offer. A big thank you to the Virginia & Truckee railroad for once again hosting our excursions.

## Nevada State Railroad Museum Excursion October 19th and 20th, 2019



Steampunk on Display



Lead Motorcar WCRG 1945



Push Car Full of Pumpkins for the Kids



Track Inspector Ready to Roll

WCRG returned to the Nevada State Railroad Museum October 19th and 20th 2019 for a two day excursion in Carson City, NV. The excursion group operated on the museums loop track and auxiliary tracks, operating between the museums regular trains. The Nevada State Railroad Museum has quite the collection of locomotives and rolling stock, several from the Virginia & Truckee railroad.

Set on Saturday morning was smooth with the motorcars setting on at the loop track crossing. With all the cars on the track and a job briefing with museum staff, The motorcar group got under way operating before the first train. During train operations, the excursion group staged at the Wabuska depot track. The Wabuska depot was moved to the museum from the town of Wabuska, about 2 hours East of Carson City on Southern Pacific's Mina Branch.

With the cars on display at the depot, families and children gathered around the cars to catch a look at them. With a push car full of pumpkins, the children thought the group was the "Great Pumpkin Express" of Carson City. In between trains, the excursion group ran the loop track. The lead motorcar was equipped with a big bowl of Halloween candy, and every time the group came through the depot crossing, the lead car would stop and hand out candy to the kids watching the group go by.

The excursion group tied up in the museums annex building. Sunday's excursion was a repeat of Saturday. At the end of the day, all the pumpkins were handed out to children that wanted a pumpkin. With big smiles on their faces, the children carried their pumpkins to the parking lot as the excursion group headed for set off. Another great excursion at the museum. Thanks to all the staff for once again hosting our excursions!

## Nevada Southern Railway Excursion October 26th and 27th, 2019



Excursion Group at Railroad Pass



Tim Broughton, Manager of Operating Practices Pilots the Rear of the Excursion



Blair Van Vliet With His MT19 Motorcar



Having fun With John Fowkes

WCRG returned to the Nevada Southern Railway October 26th and 27th 2019 for a two day excursion over the line, operating between Boulder City and Railroad Pass. New this year was the addition to Rail Explorer's railbikes. The railbikes operated directly behind our excursion, and directly in front of the excursion train. The excursion group made several trips between Boulder City and Railroad Pass both days.

Saturday's operation consisted of the excursion group departing Boulder City and arriving at Railroad Pass. Upon arrival of the rear pilot car, the railbikes proceeded into Railroad Pass, turning the railbikes and then positioning directly behind the excursion group. The train then came in and, after a job briefing with the train crew, the railbikes then were coupled up to the train and towed back to Boulder City. The excursion group then followed the train back into Boulder City, turned and prepared for the next departure to Railroad Pass. The evening run to Railroad Pass was the highlight of the excursion. Departing Boulder City just as the sun was setting behind the hills to the West, the excursion group departed into the golden skies that turned dark blue with the bright moon shining over the excursion group at Railroad Pass. At the turnaround point the excursion group walked up onto the new railroad bridge that crosses State Route 93. From the bridge the excursion group had a magnificent view of the Las Vegas Strip, including the World Famous Stratosphere.

With the excursion group turned and ready to depart Railroad Pass, the group made the 20 minute trip back to Boulder City safely and efficiently. As the group pulled into town, the glow of the activated automatic warning devices lit up each car as they went through the Yucca Street crossing and into the yard. Sunday's excursion was a successful repeat of Saturday, with everyone safely off the tracks by 4:00 PM. A big thank you to all the staff at the Nevada Southern Railway, including Randy Hess, Braden Brickman, Chris Fussell, the staff of Rail Explorers, as well as the Friends of the Nevada Southern for once again hosting our excursion.

# Photo Highlights 2019



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