

## Issue: Crew Size

- Over the past fifty years technology has facilitated a reduction in the size of freight train crews from five or six to two or three.
- Today's freight train crew consists of a Locomotive Engineer, a Conductor, and — in some cases — a Brakeman. This crew works as a unit, with each member performing specific tasks and all serving as extra eyes and ears for the unit.
- The railroad industry has begun testing a new technology called positive train control, or PTC. The BLET supports PTC as a non-critical safety overlay — a safety redundancy system that supplements existing methods of train control.
- PTC operates in the background, and is designed to perform three functions in the event a crew fails to do so: (1) enforce compliance with speed restrictions on a train; (2) enforce the limits of a train's authority to operate; and (3) prevent a train from entering into an area occupied by roadway work gangs.
- This technology still is in its infancy; in fact, the models currently being tested do not yet have the capacity to protect roadway work gangs. We believe it will be a decade or more before PTC is sufficiently mature for widespread deployment.
- The railroad industry has made “engineer-only” operation a key bargaining goal in the current round of negotiations, and has unsuccessfully attempted to manipulate the legal bargaining process to achieve this goal. It has done so in spite of the fact that the technology is new and untested, and in defiance of the reality that PTC requires a Locomotive Engineer to observe and do more, rather than less.
- This is what “engineer-only” operations means for the communities you represent:
  - No one is on the train to make an emergency stop or take any other steps to prevent an accident if the Locomotive Engineer becomes incapacitated.
  - Only one side of a train can be inspected for shifted lading or other problems while en route.
  - If a single train becomes disabled, all following trains will have to come to a halt and wait while the railroad dispatches someone to diagnose and resolve the problem, work that today is being performed by the Conductor.
  - If a train comes to a stop in a position that blocks a public grade crossing today — and will be in that position for any length of time — the Conductor will go back to the crossing and “cut” the train to clear the crossing, so that vehicular traffic may continue to flow and in order that emergency service vehicles can cross from one side of the tracks to the other. With “engineer-only” operations, all vehicular traffic will be stranded by the train until the railroad dispatches someone to “cut” the crossing, and police, fire, and emergency medical vehicles will be unable to cross the tracks during this waiting period. In the interim, precious time — and, perhaps, even more precious lives — may be lost.
  - Your community will be held hostage by any train that stops.
- The BLET believes it is dangerous to reduce crew size on the basis of what some designers claim an untested piece of technology **should** be able to do at some undefined point in the future. No reduction in crew size should even be considered until PTC has matured to the point where a proper study of the issue can be made.

