

# Fit To Be Tie'd

## RTA Tie Graders Enjoy Superb Seminar In Kentucky

This year marks the 24<sup>th</sup> year that the Railway Tie Association (RTA) has held its annual Crosstie Grading Seminar. Held July 18-20 at Stella-Jones' treating plant in the Fulton, Ky., area, the seminar focused heavily on species identification and provided hands-on experience to the graders in attendance. In-

depth instruction was provided by some of the leading experts in wood technology, wood preservation, and tie inspection who reviewed untreated wood deterioration, storage and handling, species identification, defects and grading, treating technology, and more. §

### Day 1



This year's seminar departed from previous seminars in that the engineering principles behind the wood tie specifications portion of the agenda was presented live by John Zuspan of Track Guy Consultants, far right.



Zuspan illustrates key factors used by railroads to evaluate tie performance in track and also introduced several new concepts of railroad engineering principles.



Following this half-day session, instructors Jimmy Watt and Terry Conners outline the course of study on wood species identification.



Every student receives a wood sample box...



...and Conners goes through the terminology and differences between hardwoods and softwoods and then the individual species.



The day concludes with a complete review of the first section of instruction on wood identification.

### Day 2



Day 2 begins with more instruction and the students' first test. Then, it's on to the field.



The field portion starts at the Stella-Jones plant in Fulton, where RTA Education Committee Chairman Marshall Allen works with small groups to look at defects in full-sized ties.





Allen also works with students on unusual wood identification techniques such as taste and smell. Here, he illustrates the distinctive odor of sassafras to Andrea Berry of ENSCO.



Then, everyone gets to work. Jeff Slahor of West Virginia University shown here in foreground, grades full-sized ties.



Mark Huston of BNSF works on this specimen.



Ties must not only be graded...



...but all species must be accurately identified.

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# Day 3



Day 3 starts out with one of three tests given during the day. Here, students look at large cross-sections of ties to do a final test on species identification.



Then, it's back to more instruction on wood preservation, quality control and plant management for high-volume, superb-quality tie production.



As part of the wood preservation discussion, Conners demonstrates using a vacuum pump and his "patented pickle juice" to "treat" some small wood samples.



Then, it's back to the field where the red carpet and a fantastic barbecue lunch was rolled out by our hosts, Stella-Jones.



Next, it's time to tour one of the most modern wood preserving plants in America. Stella-Jones' Joe Fields heads up the first group.



Of course, the tour starts with delivery of newly sawn ties to the facility...



...where they are graded...



...air stacked...



...and treated either with creosote alone or with a dual borate/creosote process



Then, the ties are stored under cover until they...



## 2010 RTA Tie Grading Seminar Attendees



The RTA Tie Grading Seminar Class of 2010

### Students

Golden Barnett, Olivia Burgess and Craig Vanfleet of Stella-Jones; Jesse Beal and Mike Poor of Thompson Industries Inc.; Andrea Berry of ENSCO Inc.; Terry Bradshaw, Rich Brooks, David Carter, Jacob Clark, Hosea Coffee, Kevin Crawford, Randy Pearson, Doug Pfeiffer, Allan Rutz and Allan Tyler of Koppers Inc.; Gerald Gupton of Paducah & Louisville Railway Inc.; Mark Huston, Henry Lees and Jeffrey Nelson of Burlington Northern Santa Fe; Jason Modisette of Tucker Lumber Company; Robert Pearce of Lee Inspection and Consulting Services Inc.; and Jeffrey Slahor of West Virginia University.

### Instructors & RTA Education Committee Members

Terry Conners of the University of Kentucky; Buddy Downey and Kris Hedding of Stella-Jones; Jim Gauntt of Railway Tie Association; Steve Lish of Koppers; Jimmy Watt of The Crosstie Connection; and John Zusan of Track Guy Consultants.



...are ready to ship to customers.



A big thanks goes out to not only all the students and the instructors but also these kind folks at Stella-Jones: Andy Pane, left, Wayne Kusmierczyk, center, and Joe Fields.



We also want to thank RTA President Buddy Downey, left, of Stella-Jones for his presence and support throughout the event.



Finally, all the students participate in one last practicum and winners are announced: Randy Pearson, Terry Bradshaw and Richard Brooks, all of Koppers, and Golden Barnett of Stella-Jones. Instructors pictured, from left, are Marshall Allen, Jimmy Watt, Terry Conners and Education Committee Member Kris Hedding.



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