

Tie Grading Winners Abound Seminar Scores **BEST EVER!**

Over the past few years, the RTA Education Committee has been methodically retooling the instruction materials for the annual Tie Grading Seminar. Committee members Terry Conners of the University of Kentucky, Jeff Morrell of Oregon State University, Jim Watt of The Crosstie Connection, Kris Hedding of Stella-Jones/BPB Corp., and Steve Lish of Koppers along with Southern California's Metrolink's District T&S Maintenance Manager Engineer, and Education Chairman Marshall Allen and staff have all put in extra hours to fine tune the overall event. And, while

this work remains an ongoing effort, the Executive Committee this year believed it was time to videotape the entire seminar for several future uses. Throughout the three days of instruction, students excelled, making all the hard work in preparation very gratifying. Scores were up across the board and in the testing there were multiple ties—no pun intended—so RTA gave out even more U.S. Savings Bonds for winners than ever. We start our photographic tour on the first night then progress through the next two days as students dig in for the intensive educational workout. §



Seaman Timber Company, A Boatright Company, served as host company for this year's event and sponsored an opening welcome reception. Here, 2008 RTA President Janet Seaman greets arriving student Jim Raines of Stella-Jones/BPB Corp. The reception is followed by two full days of instructions and testing.

Day 1 of Instruction

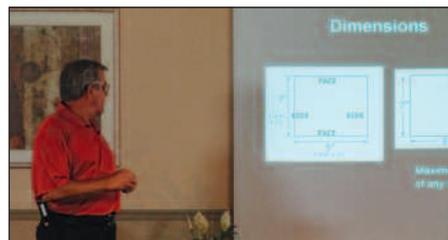
Terry Conners kicks off the day with a course overview and then moves right into instruction on the differences between hardwoods and softwoods.



Then, they are off and running, plowing through almost two dozen species making notes and getting first hand experience with species ID using a hand lens.



After an hour and a half instruction, students get to open their sample boxes and get a lesson in how to prepare samples for wood species identification.



Then, instructor Jim Watt introduces everyone to tie specifications. Between Watt and Conners, the rest of the instruction this day...



...is devoted to understanding the specs and learning about tie defects.



Then, it's off to Seaman Timber Company's plant in Montevallo to work with full-sized ties. Graders not only must identify species, but also must make sure they get the grade right.

Day 2 of Instruction



There's more to understanding tie production and quality control than just the grading aspects of this course. Day two of the seminar starts with a review, and then a presentation on plant hygiene by Dr. Jeff Morrell.



Here, Conners uses an vaccum dessicator, Dr. Terry's Magical Pickling Juice and a vacuum pump to illustrate how sapwood treats easier than heartwood in most species.

Other topics include forest management practices and wood preservation.



Finally, students are tested on their species ID skills before heading back to the plant to do a tour and then a final exam.



Back at the plant, Glenn Stewart of Seaman Timber (center, standing in truck bed) tells the students what they will see:



...an air drying yard...



...material handling...



...inspection...



...incising...



...and wood preservation, including borate pre-treatments, before creosote treatment...



...then it's back to the final exam where everyone is tested and course grades are posted.





Our winners are shown here with all the instructors. Winners are named in the first paragraph to the right.

If you have not attended an RTA Tie Grading Seminar yet, make plans to be with us next year July 20-23, 2009, when Koppers Inc. will host the event in Roanoke, Va. Call (770) 460-5553 for information.

Congratulations to all our students who completed this year's course and especially to Jeremy Yanez of BNSF; Tim Asbury and Joe Herman of Koppers Inc.; and Michael Stewart and Charlene Hartman of Seaman Timber Company, Inc. for their superior scores in winning the various tests along the way. Also, many thanks to all the Seaman Timber Company folks, RTA Instructors Conners, Morrell and Watt, and Shane Boatright for not only making the event possible, but also for the various reception and meal events sponsored.

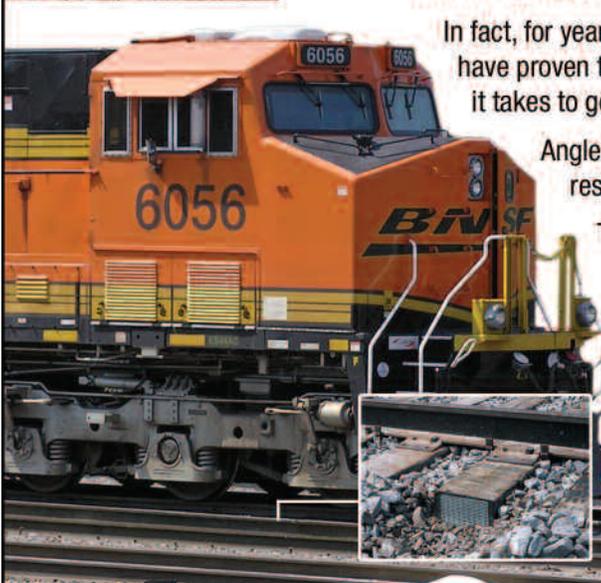
2008 Seminar Attendees

Jeremy Yanez and Patrick Smotek of Burlington Northern Santa Fe; Travis Gross of Koppers Inc.; Phillip Dowell, Ryan Headlee, Dan Stone, Rick Barnes, David Brown, Tim Asbury, Rob Whiteman, James Rymer, Thomas Talty, Paul Bower, Joe Herman, Brandon Humphries, Jason Fiore, Jeff Millar, Alex Proutey and Steve Lish of Koppers Inc.; Eric Stoulig of New Orleans Public Belt Railroad; Johnny Clark and Brian McElwain of P&G Manufacturing LLC, Vince Opaskar of Quality Borate Company; Dwaine Braswell, Michael Stewart and Charlene Hartman of Seaman Timber Company, Inc.; Jim Raines, Ricky Glisson, Barry Korth and Kris Hedding of Stella-Jones/BPB Corp.; Lee Slaven, Teragren LLC, Gary Click, Robert Sloan and James Thornton of VAE Nortrak North America Inc.



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