

Tie Graders Score An A+ In Denver

Instructors and students graded the 2012 RTA Tie Grading Seminar as the best so far.

Held Aug. 7-9 and generously hosted by Koppers Inc. at its Denver treating facility, the intense three-day course cov-

ered an enormous amount of information about railroad engineering, tie species, defects, treating, storage, handling and dimensions.

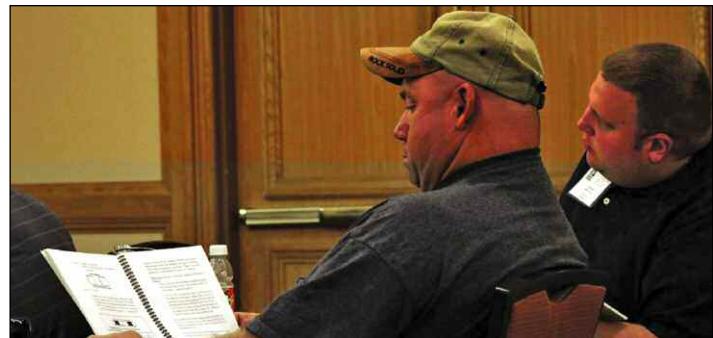
The course was taught by some of the leading experts in wood technology,

wood preservation and tie inspection. How to enhance product quality; recognize species, flaws and defects; and understand what properties make a good tie were a few of the points students took home from the seminar. ■

Day 1



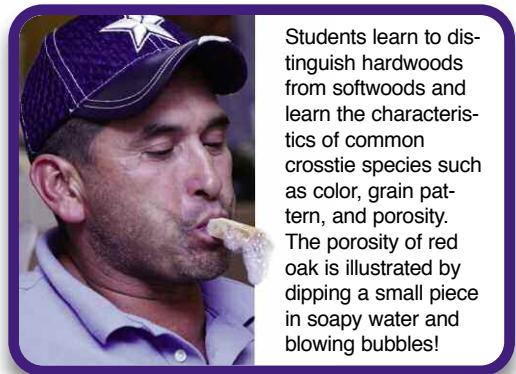
John Zuspan of The Track Guy Consultants started the 2012 Tie Grading Seminar with a look at the engineering principles behind wood crossties.



Students learn the history of how railroads have developed requirements to minimize early failures in ties and optimize the life cycle costs of pressure-treated wood ties.



Following Zuspan's half-day engineering session, Jimmy Watt of The Crosstie Connection, left, and Terry Conners of the University of Kentucky introduce the species identification portion of the seminar.

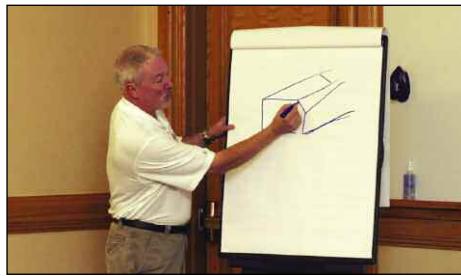


Students learn to distinguish hardwoods from softwoods and learn the characteristics of common crosstie species such as color, grain pattern, and porosity. The porosity of red oak is illustrated by dipping a small piece in soapy water and blowing bubbles!

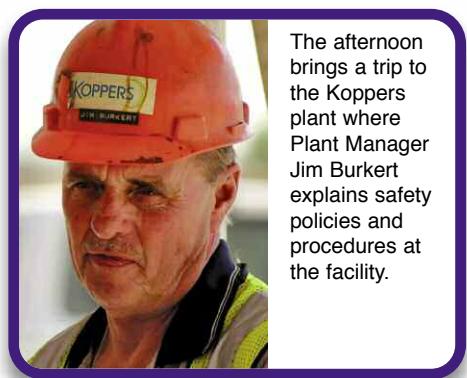
Day 2



Mike Goldston of Brewco examines a wood block to look for key species ID features.



Jim Gauntt, RTA Executive Director, conducts a discussion on tie defects. The students get their first look at grading ties with an HD video test.



The afternoon brings a trip to the Koppers plant where Plant Manager Jim Burkert explains safety policies and procedures at the facility.



Instruction on day 2 at the Koppers plant begins with a look at common crosstie defects with instruction by Jimmy Watt.



The students then have a chance to work with full-size ties at the plant. They work with instructors and in groups to determine species, dimensions and defects in the sample ties.

Day 3

Day 3 starts back in the classroom where students get the chance to look at large blocks. They then take a large block species ID test and the second HD video quiz on tie defects.



Kevin Kirkland of Nisus Corp. closely studies wood species in this session



Mike Croxton of Thunderbolt Woodtreating during one of the lecture sessions.



Connors pulled out his new concoction of "Wildcat Blood" in honor of UK's 2012 basketball victory.



Jim Ringe (l) and Connors of the Univ. of Kentucky and Jeff Morrell (c) of Oregon State Univ. help show how pressure treating affects heartwood and sap-wood differently using a vacuum chamber.



Watt and Morrell tag team the subject of wood preservation, quality control and treatability of species.



Then, it's back to the Koppers plant where students get a tour of the treating facilities.



The students first stop is at the tie grading station where they get to see first-hand what the tie graders see.



The treating cylinder, treated ties and the end plating station are highlights of the tour.

Day 3 continued...



Jim Burkert explains environmental controls and wastewater treatment at the plant.



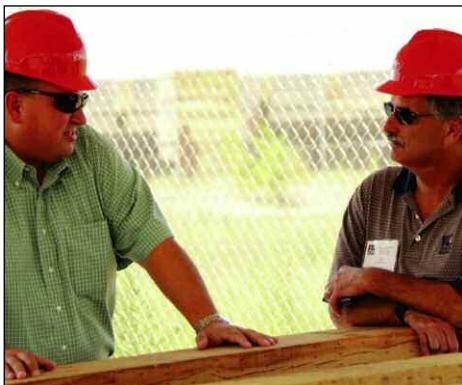
More from the Koppers plant. The tie unloader resetting a treating cylinder tram.



Stacks of treated ties at the Koppers plant.



Students take the final test individually. Again they have to identify grade and species.



While students work on the test, Education Committee Members Steve Lish and Jeff Morrell discuss the seminar thus far.



Jimmy Watt gives the answers to the final test.



Winners of the three tests (from left)—John Vela of Koppers, Howard Hillis of Gross & Janes, Ryan Peterson of Stella-Jones and Dwayne Probus of Dunaway Timber.

Comments from the attendees were positive: "Every instructor was great," "It was a very good experience," and, "Had a great time." The instructors commented that this was the best class they have had so far. The participants came with a willingness to learn and were great at

interacting with the instructors. RTA expresses appreciation not only to all the students and their companies for participating but also to our all-volunteer instruction staff and, of course, our host plant, Koppers Denver. The seminar was outstanding. Thanks to all! ■

2012 RTA Tie Grading Seminar Attendees & Instructors



Instructors, Students & RTA Education Committee Members

Jimmy Watt of The Crosstie Connection; Terry Conners and Jim Ringe of the University of Kentucky Dept. of Forestry; Jeff Morrell of Oregon State University; Robert Pearce of Lee Inspection and Consulting Services; and Marshall Allen of Allen Railroad Services. Not shown, Jim Gauntt, RTA Executive Director, Barbara Stacey, RTA Committee Coordinator; and John Zuspan of The Track Guy Consultants.

Congratulations, Students!

Johnny Barker; Alicia Bitner of BNSF Railway; Mike Croxton of Thunderbolt Wood Treating; Richie Eads and Lee Hillis of Gross & Janes Co.; Jason Feagans & Ryan Holmes of National Salvage & Service Corp.; Mike Goldston of Brewco Inc.; Robert Guinan of OmniTRAX Inc.; Jody Jackson & Ryan Peterson of Stella-Jones Corporation – Plant; Kevin Kirkland of Nisus Corporation; Eddie Lipe of North American Tie & Timber LLC – Procurement; Dwayne Probus of Dunaway Timber Co. Inc.; Patrick Sullivan of Tolko Ashcroft Treating; Leon Trail, Raymond Ureste, John Vela, Ray Webster, Grady Clingan, Fidel Garfio, Michael McHugh, Barry Strickland and Donald Bielski of Koppers Inc. Not pictured, Grady Clingan.

Special thanks to Barbara Stacey of RTA for the photos and captions for this article.

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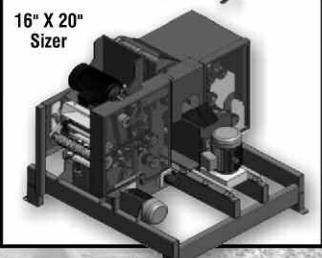
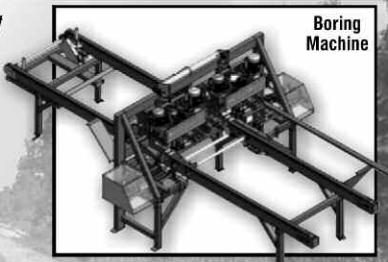
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