

Tie Grading Students Score **BIG** In The Ark-La-Tex

The 2013 Crosstie Grading Seminar was held July 30-Aug. 1 in the Shreveport-Bossier City area of Louisiana and in Taylor, Ark., at the Gross & Janes Co. crosstie production facility.

Hosted by Gross & Janes Co. in the area often called the Ark-La-Tex, the seminar included three full days of instruction to accommodate grading station videos, discussion and testing, as well as an addi-

tional review session on species identification. Full-sized crossties were even brought into the classroom for an up-close-and-personal look during instruction.

“This was a hands-on learning experience for students,” said RTA Executive Director Jim Gauntt. “And we are especially grateful to Gross & Janes and our other sponsors for the first-class experience.”

Day 1

Learning The Ropes



RTA's 2013 Tie Grading Seminar students embark on their journey with a half-day session on the engineering principles behind the use of ties in track, kindly provided by John Zuspan of The Track Guy Consultants.



Zuspan explains the role the crosstie plays in the management of forces on the track structure. Ties must hold line, surface and gage to do their job.



Then, Dr. Terry Conners of the University of Kentucky takes over to explain the differences in wood species and how these differences affect performance.



A look at wood structure reveals subtle features that play a role in determining which species is in front of an inspector.



Then, it's hands on for the attendees as they begin to sort through the 16 primary hardwood species taught in the course.



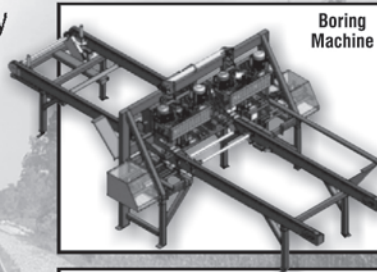
Inspectors may be called upon to distinguish between oaks and mixed hardwoods depending on how their railroad customer specifies their orders.



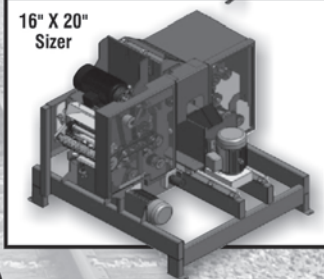
Finally, as we close Day 1 of the seminar, the students and their guests wrap it all up with an Operation Lifesaver presentation by Mark Connell of the Port Terminal Railroad in Houston.

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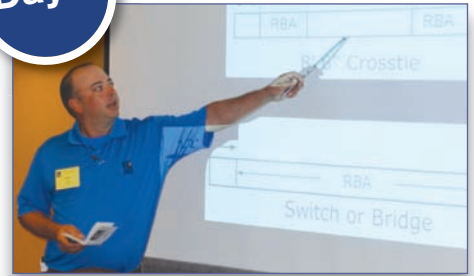


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Day 2

Nuts & Bolts



Day 2 brings with it our newest instructor, Robert Pearce of Lee Inspection Company, who dives into the nuts and bolts of how to identify grade ties. Do you know what the RBA is? How to define it? Our tie inspectors do.



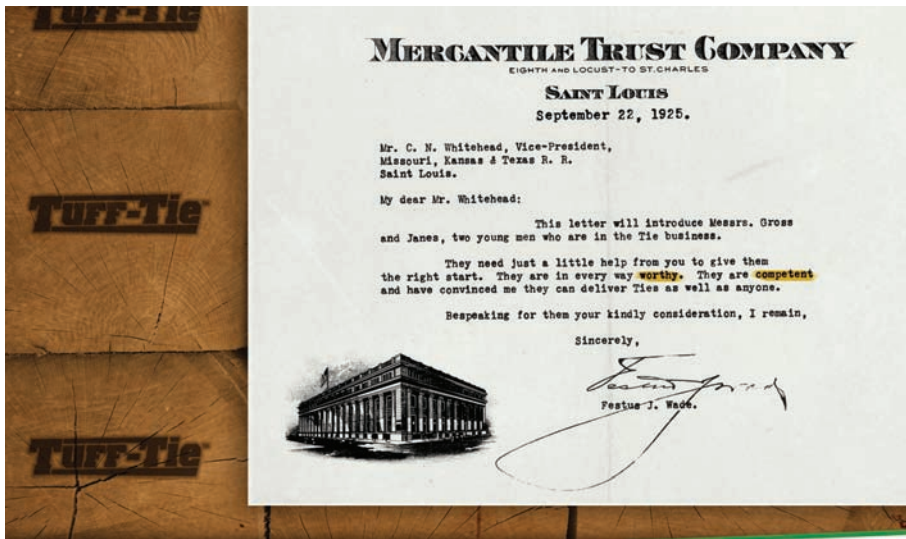
The definitions of each defect are covered in depth. Then, the students take their first of five grading-related tests.



After this, Dr. Jeff Morrell of Oregon State University and Randy Baileys of Lonza Wood Protection lecture on wood preserving from creosote and borates to the newest kids on the block for ties—Copper Naphthenate and ACZA. They also cover quality control in the treating plant.



Then, it's time to take another test, this time on wood species.



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Day 2 Tests...



This year's collective test scores were the best ever.



If you take a close look, could you tell what tie species this is? Is it a grade tie?



To conclude the seminar, we all drive to Gross and Janes' plant in Taylor, Ark., where Mike Pourney conducts a tour before the final instruction and tests.



After the grader passes judgment the ties are sorted...

Day 3 Putting New Skills To The Test



For the first time ever, our first test on full-sized ties occurred at the hotel. Thanks to Gross and Janes, our host plant for 2013, Robert Pearce, and all the education committee members who manhandled the ties on site—whew—the one-time-only change to the agenda went off without a hitch.



Robert Pearce (atop the stack) gives the call so the scores can be tallied.



In the test, students must identify species and grade. If the tie is rejected as an industrial grade tie they have to explain why.



For reinforcement and to cover items missed in the first test, it's back to more testing in the classroom.



As with most tie plants, ties are loaded onto the chain for grading...



...and double-end trimming.



...and incised and stacked.



Gross & Janes employs Nisus' Cellutreat borate dip process to treat every tie that ends up on the Kansas City Southern Railroad from this facility.



These ties were air-stacked in 2012 and rest side by side with those more recently stacked.



Then, there is a little more instruction on species and defects from Education Committee Chairman Marshall Allen (second from left) of Allen Railroad Services.



At long last...the final practicum...



...where 25 more ties are identified for species and grade.



Everyone, from instructor to student, is a winner with the knowledge he or she has imparted and gained.



But these three were tops in the final tests. From left: Richard Piper, Brewco Inc.; Douglas Cloud, Stella-Jones; and Jim Brient, Nisus Corp.

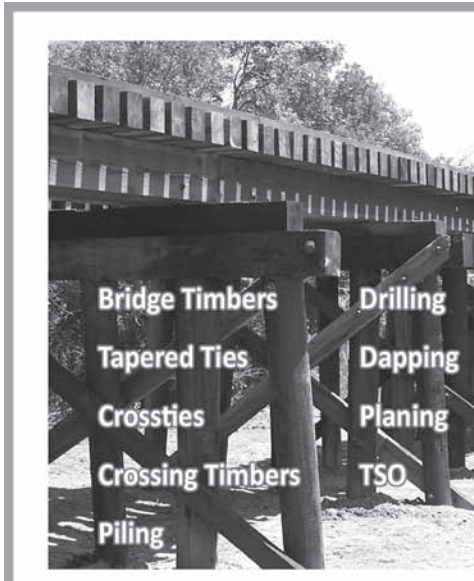
Instructors: Marshall Allen, Allen Railroad Services; Randy Baileys, Lonza Wood Protection; Terry Connors and Jim Ringe, University of Kentucky; Jim Gauntt, Railway Tie Association; Jeff Morrell, Oregon State University; Robert Pearce, Lee Inspection & Consulting; John Zuspan, Track Guy Consultants.

Education Committee Members: Kris Hedding and Steve Lish of Koppers Inc.

Students: Appalachian Timber Services, LLC - Ryan Fitzwater; Brewco Inc. - Richard Piper; DTE Energy Services - Bill Taylor; Gross & Janes Co. - Paula Rogers and Scott McBride; K. L. Barton & Sons Tie Co., Inc. - Wes Chandler; Koppers Inc. - Jared Miller, Andrew Lozier and Benjamin Brown; Lee Inspection and Consulting - Ben Lee and Bobby Price; Nisus Corporation - Jim Brient; Stella Jones Corp. - Joe Morrey, Bryan English, Johnnie Taylor, Douglas Cloud, Reginald Johnson, Terry Cohen, Brian Burholt, Mike Himes, Tim Ping and Tyler Williams; Tolko Ashcroft Treating - Darcy Klages and Anita Starbuck; Trackwork Design & Manufacturing - Robert Castor; and VAE Nortrak Inc: Richard Payne.

Sponsors

Special thanks are due to the sponsors of the 2013 Tie Grading Seminar: Gross & Janes Co., welcome reception and fork lift rental; Wheeler Lumber, welcome reception; Lee Inspection & Consulting, shrimp boil dinner.



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