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I have worked for Union Pacific for over forty years, and in safety programs for the last 15. I was the safety captain for local 473, was on the first Total Safety Culture team in La Grande and now I currently serve as the Legislative Representative for local 473. I have strived to make the railroad a safer place to work. One thing that is imperative to the safe operation of the railroad is to have two crew members in the cab of the locomotive.

We travel through remote areas that have limited to no access. In the past we have had medical emergencies for crew members that have ranged from choking, heart attack and stroke. With a single person crew in place what would happen if a medical emergency arose? That person's crew mate would be the first responder. Who would stop the train, secure it and call for help if the single crew person went down? Yet another important issue is the terrain of the Blue Mountain crossing. It is known to be the most difficult section of the route from Omaha to Portland. The grade is significant and has caused issues for trains for over a hundred years. Union Pacific continuously ignores the terrain and has increased the train lengths every year. We now move trains reaching over 2 miles long and in excess of 14,000 tons. These trains break frequently due to the grade and require two people to fix and keep them moving.

Trains need two sets of eyes in the cab looking out for the safety of the public going through towns and over crossings. Due to the length of trains today, when we have to move them into sidings we have to cut it at the crossings and secure it by applying hand breaks to cars to keep them from rolling back into crossing or the main line. All of this requires two people to do. One on the ground making the cuts and one on the train to shove and pull. It simply cannot be done with one person.

Most trains carry hazardous materials that require close attention. We have seen firsthand what can happen when they derail, right here in our own backyard, and around the country. One to remember is Lac-Megantic, Canada. Where a single crew operation had a train rollaway causing the death of 47 people, 2000 people evacuated and forty buildings destroyed.

Please don't let that happen here! Keep everyone safe with two people in the cab.

Michael O'Rourke

Legislative Representative 473