

# IOWA PACIFIC DISPATCH



Second Quarter 2011



## LEVELLAND INDUSTRIAL RAIL PARK

The 300 acre Levelland Industrial Rail Park (LIRP) is a premier industrial, distribution, and manufacturing park in West Texas with immediate access to road & rail (21,000 track feet) transport infrastructure. The LIRP allows companies to improve their ability to efficiently distribute products within the High Ground of Texas region and globally. Industrial expansion sites are available from five to 67 acres. The facility offers both rail and non-rail served sites.



## Up and running

In a matter of two years, Levelland Economic Development Corporation went from concept to creation of an industrial rail park with 21,000 feet of track. Located 30 miles west of Lubbock, Texas, they are in the process of selling lots with a few

customers ready to get moving.

“It’s been a busy six months or so,” said Dave Quinn, Levelland Economic Development Corporation executive director. “We’ve been out kicking the tires, and it’s been a fun process.”

The Levelland Industrial Rail Park sits on 300 acres of land. It has 13 plots for sale with sizes ranging from 5 acres to 65 acres. Double track occupies most of the

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# New ideas

A view of the Chicago skyline from North Avenue Yard.

Chicago Terminal Railroad Superintendent Tim Fuhrer feels like his railroad career has come full circle.

“Coming from a switchman and working my way through the ranks and up to management; it’s a lot of fun,” said Fuhrer, who was promoted from conductor in March. “I’m excited for the new challenge.”

The longtime CTM employee has received praise from his colleagues. He welcomes it and sees more change on the horizon.

“In any transition, new people have new ideas,” Fuhrer said. “My goals are to bring new ideas to

this place.”

Different angles on troubleshooting problems and where to make necessary changes and enhancements are just a few new responsibilities for him. As superintendent, he’s in charge of three territories, including industrial parks in Elk Grove Village and Bensenville, both near Chicago. The other is a North Avenue job, part of the old Goose Island/Milwaukee Road in downtown Chicago, which has become a historic switching district throughout the years.

“It’s a challenge of finding new customers and upgrading the line as needed to keep moving forward,” Fuhrer said.



A Chicago Terminal Railroad locomotive shines in the sunlight while passing through a yard.



Attendees stand during the Levelland Industrial Rail Park ribbon-cutting ceremony Nov. 17.

# Up and running

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area with triple tracks dotting the landscape in some portions. The park is a mile wide and designed to be user friendly on both sides. It was unveiled publicly in November with a ribbon cutting.

“We offer a reliever valve for congestion on the main line,” Quinn said. “It’s a good alternative in the region – and you don’t have to deal with the hassle.”

Railroads with target industries in renewable energy, manufacturing, agriculture and oil and gas operations now have an investment opportunity that pays off in the long run, Quinn said.

“We see this as a good play,” he said. “But we took a risk in our community.”

The project cost approximately \$8.6 million, which includes

\$4 million in bonds. Storage capacity already built in the park enables railroads to empty on one side and fill up on the other, reducing the amount of capital investment up front, Quinn said.

“Eventually, each company will have its own access road,” he said.

Some companies in the region will have the opportunity to ship product on rail for the first time. Nearby oil service companies could see the rail park as a strategic location. They could be the first shipper from the Levelland community to take byproduct out of the region to a processing facility.

“We’re hoping for this to turn into a permanent thing,” Quinn said. “But it will take a couple months to smooth everything out.”

The rail park is served by West Texas & Lubbock Railway.



Kyle Kimpel, conductor, stops traffic for a train to pass.



Crew members communicate before beginning a task in Elk Grove Village, Ill.

## 300 days injury free

There's no better way to emphasize safety than by starting a shift with a thorough job briefing.



"Safety is always our first priority," said Matt Jackson, Permian Basin Railways trainmaster in Monahans, Texas. "The safer we are, the more efficiently we can serve the customers."

Identifying potential hazards in the workplace is important, but so is ensuring every employee is on the same page. Working safely means employees return home to their families the same way they came in.

Transportation and Engineering employees of Permian Basin Railways, which includes West Texas & Lubbock Railway and the Texas-New Mexico Railroad, are more than 300 days without a reportable injury.

"I take a lot of pride in our safety record," Jackson said. "We have good employees with solid heads on their shoulders."

His crews review incidents experienced on other railroads every day as part of their morning job briefings. Learning from other people's mistakes can be an effective reminder in the name of safety.

"I feel if everyone understands, then they watch out for each other," said Randall Roberson, roadmaster. "When I go out to projects, I make sure everyone is working safely; we make it our No. 1 slogan."

Discussing the scope of work, equipment required for the job and proper forms of protection with every employee is invaluable. Slips, trips and falls are the most common type of injury, while second is pinch points. New employees on property also need to be observed by co-workers as an added precaution.

"They need to learn and understand the work to be done, and the method to accomplish it," said Bruce Carswell, general manager. "Whenever job circumstances change, we update them before continuing."

At the end of the day, communication is what's most important, he said. Situational awareness, staying focused and following rules cannot be stressed enough.

"Safety is never fixed," Carswell said. "It's something you're always working on, no matter what happens."

Keeping track of the number of injury-free days as a whole motivates employees to do their best. No one wants to ruin the safety streak and everyone wants to go home to their loved ones. It's a win-win situation.

"We keep a record to make sure we stay safe and incident free," Roberson said. "It's rewarding to the employees and let's them know this is what we've accomplished."

## Training conductors

In light of business growth, Arizona Eastern Railway recently hired a dozen new conductors to bolster its mission of serving customers safely and efficiently.

"We hire as a group and train as a group because it's a better educational experience," said Geoffrey McCormick, general manager. "We put a substantial investment in these people with the goal of ensuring things are done safely."

Trainees put in nearly 400 hours of work during three days of classroom training and four to six weeks of on-the-job training. When shadowing active conductors, trainees are scored on their performances and knowledge base. In the classroom, they must pass numerous examinations.

"This is a really demanding job," McCormick said. "Through the training process, we get a good picture of who can handle it and who can't."

Basic railroad terminology, safety rules and general codes for operation are stressed, along with concepts and policies governing the company. Safety is emphasized most, and McCormick said every railroad

manager is considered a safety officer.

"Safety is the primary concern in everything we do," he said. "We train employees as best we can in order to have the safest railroad possible."

Employees of all ages and walks of life undergo training to become conductors. Most decided to change careers midway through their life.

"Half of our class are former truck drivers," McCormick said. "They come to the railroad having already experienced similar safety and hours of service requirements."

He is teaching his fifth formal training session for Iowa Pacific. He has taught teams in Texas and Chicago, with the goal of inspiring safety in every person.

"Safety is, to me, the No. 1 priority," McCormick said.



Mary Cummins, locomotive engineer, completes FRA-required daily inspections. It is important for conductors to team up with their co-workers to ensure all necessary paperwork is complete.

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General Iron Industries is one of many customers served by Chicago Terminal Railroad.

## Building relationships

When it comes to good working relationships between customers, short line railroads have an advantage over the rest.

No matter the course of communication technology and smartphones, nothing will ever replace the face-to-face interactions happening every day on the railroad.

“That’s what we do; that’s what makes us successful,” said Tim Fuhrer, Chicago Terminal Railroad superintendent. “We go out and talk to customers one on one and build a relationship.”

Fuhrer makes it a point to visit customers regularly to see how their needs are being met, where improvements are needed, and to answer questions and comments.

“My job is to go out and talk to each customer to see how things are going,” he said. “I ask them what we can do to make our services better.”

When new businesses change to larger facilities, they upgrade capacity and order more railcars to be delivered, which in turn makes the railroad more successful.

“Their growth is our growth – they’re one in the same,” Fuhrer said. “It’s like that chicken and egg problem: which comes first?”

Numerous businesses served by CTM have grown through the years, as have their demand for service.

“That’s growth right there,” Fuhrer said.

Iowa Pacific  
118 South Clinton Street  
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## Track upgrades

Significant track and surface restoration will enhance service to Permian Basin Railways’ customers.

Maintenance of Way crews are replacing approximately 15,000 ties and 14,000 tons of ballast between Monahans, Texas, and Jal, N.M. More than 20 employees are working together on this project, which includes two spot crews and one mini tie gang. The project is rehabilitative, so crews are jumping around to different spots, replacing only certain areas with new materials.

Crews are doing an outstanding job of coordinating demands for a project this size, which include working safely and minimizing train impact as a whole, said Bruce Carswell, general manger. The project began two months ago and is making steady progress.

An increase in traffic means more wear and tear on the rails, which tend to destabilize over time. The rail expands and contracts with the change in seasonal temperatures, causing horizontal and lateral movement. Moisture levels also are important, because without adequate drainage, water can deteriorate ties over time.

“You have to have stability to ensure the track doesn’t shift,” said Randall Roberson, roadmaster.

Having the ability to keep everything in place is one reason Engineering crews play a vital role in the railroad. The average crew size is around four people, all of whom collectively install approximately 150 ties between each mile of track.

“This is a tight-knit group of employees,” Roberson said. “I’ve done a lot of work with them in the past.”

Familiarity goes a long way, but so does communication and dedication to safety. Focus is an important determinant in on-the-job protection, especially when heavy equipment is moving quietly around crews working in the field.

This is where job briefings come back into play.

“Job briefings are a fundamental part of what we do,” Carswell said. “We don’t often have the ability to gather everyone together for a single conversation, so it’s important to have a formal structure.”

Crews are building a new siding on the south end to help support additional traffic.



The foundation beneath, including ballast, ties and plates, helps keep the rail in place with as little movement as possible.