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Ten Maine Operation Lifesaver volunteers journeyed to North Conway, New Hampshire earlier this fall and joined about 90 other rail safety education advocates at the Region 1 Operation Lifesaver workshop. Region 1 includes all six New England states plus New York and New Jersey.



Maine Operation Lifesaver participants, some with spouses at the N. Conway workshop

The two-day event drew a number of railroad and Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) officials along with staff from Operation Lifesaver's national office in Alexandria, Virginia – many of whom led or participated in discussions. Among the programs attended by volunteers were updates on Grade Crossing Crash Investigation (GCCCI) and Rail Safety for Emergency Responders (RSER) courses; new ideas for presenters to use when speaking before groups; partnering with railroads; and public education and enforcement, the latter presented by a representative from the FRA's Volpe Transportation Center.

Special thanks go out to the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (operators of Amtrak's Downeaster service) in Portland and the St. Lawrence & Atlantic Railroad in Auburn which were among other rail entities in Region 1 to make monetary contributions towards the workshop.

Every two years at the Region 1 Operation Lifesaver workshop, each state's organization recognizes a volunteer for exemplary work towards railroad safety education. Darry Nile of Gardiner, who also serves as treasurer for Maine Operation Lifesaver, was honored in 2009. According to State Coordinator Fred Hirsch, Darry has been one of the most active volunteers. Of particular appreciation is the fact Darry often could help out with little advance notice and would travel nearly 100 miles on occasion to staff events.



Maine Operation Lifesaver Chairman Walt Zaccadelli (left) presents Darry Nile with a plaque in appreciation of his volunteerism

The new home for the Great Falls Model Railroad Club (144 Mill Street) in Auburn was the scene in October for the 2009 Maine Operation Lifesaver volunteer appreciation day. Several club members including Paul Lodge and Jay Calnan, both who double as Maine Operation Lifesaver volunteers, put on a delicious barbecue. Following a brief monthly meeting, those attending participated in some rail safety education and socializing.



Some education is included as part of the volunteer appreciation event

Paul, Jay, and other modelers showed off their new headquarters including the operation of N, HO, and G scale layouts. With more room, the club also has additional space as Operation Lifesaver's southern Maine storage and distribution center for educational material.



Paul Lodge (left) describes one of the railroad club's layouts

Bangor native Dick Towle has been returning to his home state this year leading Rail Safety for Emergency Responders (RSER) courses for dozens of first responders. The four-hour session covers approaching a rail emergency scene; entering a locomotive; hazardous material leaks from a railcar; identifying electrical, fuel, and air systems on a train; and stopping a train among other scenarios. Earlier this year, Dick organized and led courses in Gorham and two in the Portland area. Similar programs are scheduled in November in Bangor, Brownville Junction, Winthrop, and Ellsworth. Responders from several surrounding communities attend at each location.

Besides being an Operation Lifesaver member, Dick, a retired officer with the Manchester, Massachusetts Police Department, is now a law enforcement liaison officer with the FRA.

The RSER course was developed by and is conducted by the railroad industry, the FRA, and Operation Lifesaver.



Instructor Dick Towle and participants during a recent RSER course

Here's where we've been recently and through September 30, 2009....



We stand ready to deliver the railroad safety message statewide.

E-mail: info@maineol.org or call 207-827-7367



Northeast Technical Institute Drivers Education, Hermon

Maine School Site Health Promotion Conference, Carrabassett Valley

Oxford Hills Truck Driving School, S. Paris

Bair's Driving School, Bangor, Hermon, Blue Hill & Bar Harbor

Winslow Elementary

Morse High School Drivers Education, Bath

Oakfield Railfan Day

Bucksport Bay Festival

Gray-New Gloucester School Bus Drivers

American Folk Festival, Bangor

Ron Fox Driving School, Fairfield

Lindbergh Crate Museum, Canaan

Auburn Mall

Hampden Children's Day

Maine Safety/Health Conference, Augusta

Vassalboro School

Aroostook County Action Program School Bus Drivers, Presque Isle

Freeport Elders

Daisy Day Care, Freeport