Profile of RIFA Member and USA Divisional Leader, Bob Andrews

Robert C. Andrews, Jr.

Bob Andrews is the Founder, President and CEO of the Bob Andrews Group, LLC (BAG) founded in February 2005. The Bob Andrews Group, LLC is headquartered in San Antonio, Texas.

Mr. Andrews is a Texas Registered Professional Engineer (fire protection branch specialty), a professional member of the Society of Fire Protection Engineers (USA), and a member of the Institution of Fire Engineers (UK). He has been practicing fire protection engineering for over thirty-years and has specialized in the fire safe design of railroad passenger cars, passenger railroad emergency preparedness, and passenger train regulatory compliance, for the past ten years. He a 2008 graduate of the Railway Management Program at Michigan State University as well as a member of the National Fire Protection Association's Rail Transportation Systems Section. In addition to his duties with PDI, Mr. Andrews is Managing Partner of The Catalpa Falls Group, LLC (CFG), a vintage railroad car acquisition, restoration, and leasing company.

Highly unusual amongst fire protection engineers, Mr. Andrews has been an active member of the fire service for over 37 years, having joined his local volunteer fire company in suburban Philadelphia on his sixteenth birthday. His fire service experience includes serving with the East Whiteland Volunteer Fire Association (PA), the College Park Volunteer Fire Department (MD), the Phoenix Fire Department (AZ), Marathon Oil Company (OH), Celanese Chemical Company (TX), and the Refinery Terminal Fire Company (TX). In addition to his fire service credentials, Mr. Andrews has been a Licensed Texas Peace Officer for over twenty-three years and currently holds Master Peace Officer and Instructor certifications. He is an internationally recognized police dog trainer.

Mr. Andrews earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Fire Protection Engineering from the University of Maryland in 1980 and a Master of Science Degree in Executive Fire Service Leadership from Grand Canyon University in 2002. He is a graduate of the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program and received the 1990 Outstanding Research Award for his paper that discussed the feasibility of applying the Incident Command System to incidents in the refining and petrochemical industry and is an internationally recognized author and speaker having delivered emergency response, industrial firefighting and passenger rail safety presentations in France, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, and the United Kingdom

Bob is offering his expertise in emergency response services and safety consulting to oil companies, including those in the Bakken Shale in north Dakota which produces 750,000 barrels of oil a day. The Eagle Ford Shale in south Texas is projected to produce 2 million barrels of oil a day by the year 2020. He said despite the recent accidents, rail is still the safest way to haul oil. "Just as flying on an airliner is very safe, from time to time things can occur, and we know that so it's the industry's job to prepare for an accident should it occur," Andrews said. At the end of 2014, a train carrying oil from the Bakken Shale derailed in rural north Dakota and caught fire. It took several days for the fire to be put out. Andrews said keeping oil better contained is possible, "however the problem is that right now there is no capacity to build these new cars, and with regard to training and rolling out new

emergency response products like we have, it's going to take some time for the industry to catch up," Andrews believes the greater risk of dangerous oil spills is in the north and northeast United States. He said the oil industry infrastructure is safer in south Texas and the fire response is better equipped to handle an incident.

Fire-protection company Bob Andrews Group LLC this month launched a new subsidiary that offers emergency-response services for shippers moving crude oil by rail. The company's fledgling BAG-Emergency Response Services unit will provide firefighting crews and specialized equipment for the petroleum industry, which increasingly uses trains to get crude from remote shale plays like the Eagle Ford to refining centers. We asked Andrews to discuss the potential dangers of the practice and what his new venture can do to abate the risks.

Q: Clearly the shipping of crude-oil-by-rail is a growing trend. Has the industry done enough to ensure the safety of this practice?

A: Statistically, shipping crude-oil-by-rail remains one of the safest means of transporting oil to market, especially when pipelines are not available. Having said that, I don't know anyone who predicted how fast the recent oil shale industry would grow throughout North America, nor especially predict its impact on railroads. Some have called it the "Oil-Shale Boom," others the "21st Century Gold Rush." And like the original Gold Rush, there are a lot of benefits, a lot of opportunities, and a lot of challenges. I think that to some degree the industry has to play catch-up regarding crude oil train safety, especially in light of the recent accident in Quebec. However, I am confident that the industry is actively looking at numerous ways to improve the safety of crude-oil-by-rail, and the industry will be implementing those improvements in the future.

Q: Why did you form the new BAG-Emergency Response Services subsidiary to focus on this kind of specialized emergency response service?

A: The industry is taking a multi-targeted approach to crude oil rail safety. That approach includes reviewing and improving operating procedures, as well as improving the strength and design of the rail tank cars themselves. But there is also a need to increase the level of emergency preparedness and response in the unlikely event that a major emergency occurs in the future. I formed BAG-Emergency Response Services to provide an effective corporate structure from which I could combine my 30 years of specialized oil, refining, and chemical firefighting, fire protection engineering and railroad experience to meet this specialized emergency response challenge.

Q: Should people be worried about the movement of crude unit trains through their neighborhoods and towns?

A: I think the public should be aware, possibly concerned, but certainly not worried. To put it in terms that most people would understand, we can look at the safety of the commercial aviation industry as a comparison. Like crude-oil rail transport, flying commercially is a very safe way to travel. Yet, from time to time, we read about an accident involving a commercial airliner. While we are ever aware that risk exists, many of us, me included, routinely fly. We expect, however, that should a mishap occur, that a very dedicated, effective, and robust emergency response system will activate and respond to our airliner emergency. BAG-Emergency Response Services will provide that specialized emergency response capability to the crude-oil-by-rail market, similar to what we expect from the commercial aviation industry

Like the aviation industry, safety is best served by an open and honest approach to safety – an approach which in the UK is facilitated by a Confidential Incident Reporting and Analysis System, “CIRAS”

What is CIRAS in the RAIL Industry?

CIRAS is the United Kingdom “Confidential Incident Reporting and Analysis System” (CIRAS). It is a confidential, but not anonymous, means for any railway employee to report safety concerns. It is totally independent, though it is supported by industry, and covers all railways and sectors in Great Britain. Once a concern is raised, CIRAS seeks a response from the companies responsible and works to facilitate a resolution. It began in 1996, when a team from Strathclyde University was asked to introduce a confidential reporting system for ScotRail. Following the Ladbroke Grove incident in 1999, CIRAS was extended to include the whole of the UK’s mainline rail system. It encourages people to be involved with safety throughout the whole rail industry. Along with other bodies like the Rail Industry Fire Association, which brings together all train operating companies and developers of new stations to address issues like emergency planning and training for the emergency services, this kind of initiative show the industry prioritises all aspects of safety, and fire safety is a very important part of that.

What about the rail cars themselves? Aren’t they inherently safe?

I’ve heard a lot about new Standards for the Fire Protection of Rolling Stock; what is that about?

At the European level, the introduction in 2012 of the European Fire Safety Standard EN45545-2 for rolling stock materials is a significant development. Stemming from the concept of free movement of goods and services across the European Union (EU) it focuses on interoperability – the facilitation, improvement and development of international rail transport services within the EU and beyond, as well as the creation of an internal market for equipment and services to support construction, renewal, upgrading and operation of the region’s rail system. Technical harmonisation is a key strand in this initiative. EN45545 has had various components over the years including TSIs covering Safety in Railway Tunnels (SRT TSI), High-Speed Rolling Stock (HS RS TSI) and Conventional Rolling Stock (CR TSI), all of which are intended to promote the interoperability of rolling stock across the EU. The process has not been without its difficulties, especially as each of the major European states had its own unique testing methods and local specifications, all of which would be superseded by EN45545. Nevertheless, progress along the hard road to the right formula has been driven by an understanding that common standards are in everyone’s best interests. It is laudable to have the same level of safety across Europe. Passengers travelling on a train that leaves from the north of Norway and travels to southern Spain can have confidence in the level of safety along the entire journey.