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Wyman Jones, in green safety vest, teaches a course in transit rail system safety, transit rail incident investigation and rail hazard management to technicians and executives from the Korean Railroad Corporation.



Metro Rail Expert Travels to South Korea to Train High-Speed Rail Officials

By Ned Racine

(Dec. 14) In October, Metro's Wyman Jones brought his 35 years of rail design, operations and safety experience to South Korea to train technicians and executives of the Korean Railroad Corporation. Jones's commitment to rail, however, began 40 years before at a Canadian railroad crossing.

From October 30 through November 10, Jones taught courses in transit rail system safety, transit rail incident investigation and rail hazard management. He joined the three-person training team at the request of the Transportation Safety Institute (TSI), an arm of the federal Department of Transportation.

"I would say they were [most] interested in how we document and keep systems from becoming less safe as they grow older," said



Jones, who was making his first visit to South Korea. Training took place in Deajeon, a city founded during the Bronze Age.

Because the United States remains a world leader in accident investigation, Jones said, the Korean group approached the United States when it decided to improve the Korean rail system.

Wyman Jones, a supervising engineer in Rail Operations Safety, has been a trainer for the United States Government since the 1980s.

Jones, a supervising engineer in Rail Operations Safety, has been a trainer for the United States Government since the 1980s, while he worked for the Canadian National Railways. He has worked for TSI since 1989.

A Certified Safety & Security Director with the World Safety Organization, an organization that examines system safety, pools knowledge gained from safety problems and disperses that knowledge around the world, Jones joined RTD in 1989 as a rail safety engineer.

Jones particularly impressed the Korean Railroad Corporation with his experience building and designing railroads in Canada, the Dominican Republic, Europe, Malaysia and numerous rail and transit systems within the United States.

System safety for high-speed train

The completion of the Republic of Korea's first 300-kilometer-an-hour train spurred rail officials to reach out to the Department of Transportation and TSI. Unlike systems in the United States, the Korean high-speed train (running at 186 miles per hour) shares track with freight, commuter and transit trains.

"The consequences of a slight imperfection [with] high speed is devastating," Jones said. "If you're going to operate the high-speed [service], you have to be 10 times pickier with the subtleties that you find."

"They wanted to know about hazard analysis, hazard identification, system safety and rail accident investigation, to make sure their high-speed rail would not fall into some of the pitfalls of other systems," Jones explained, "especially since there is no mandate to really be proactive [before] an accident occurs."

Now Korean rail staff wants to analyze their system before an accident prompts an investigation, Jones said. One reason the Korean Railroad Corporation pursued Jones's expertise was its desire to sell its high-speed rail systems to other countries.



Besides overcoming the difficulties in translating English to Korean and back again—Jones spent one day drawing pictures to explain technical information—he found himself facing a different culture among the Korean rail workers.

Jones trained approximately 35 Koreans, most with 25 to 30 years of rail experience. Drawn from all rail disciplines (vehicle, track, operations, signals, control and power), the trainees ranged from the Korean train system director to field workers. Some knew of the Metro system before Jones arrived.

Besides overcoming the difficulties in translating English to Korean and back again—Jones spent one day drawing pictures to explain technical information—he found himself facing a different culture among the Korean rail workers.

For example, Jones assigned his classes to examine their own rail system. "One of our exercises was . . . go take a look at a station and come back with some hazards," he said. "Take 20 minutes, go down to the station, glance through it, take some pictures and come back and make a presentation to us. The idea was for them to get to learn what to look for . . . *before* an accident happens."

Another example grew from a derailment that happened the Saturday Jones and his team arrived in South Korea—a derailment reportedly caused by a shattered train wheel. Jones asked his trainees how they were investigating the train's maintenance. But the Koreans responded that they already knew a wheel had shattered and caused the derailment.

"We want to find the root cause so you can fix it," Jones responded. "Now we're digging deeper. That was a different culture for them." With his trainees, Jones emphasized that system safety begins with design and building and runs through the system's life cycle, including operations and replacement.

Tragic accident spurs lifelong commitment

Jones's commitment to rail began the night of a high school football game near his hometown of Tavistock, Ontario, Canada. After the game, he and friends waited for a parent to pick them up. But when his friend's mother arrived in her station wagon, she had brought her daughter along, meaning one teen would not fit in her car.

So young Wyman Jones called his father. His father agreed to pick him up; Wyman would only have to wait an additional 15 minutes. So young Jones said, "No problem. Go ahead." And his friends drove off in the station wagon.

"Well, as I'm coming home, we see fire trucks, ambulances and everything else—it is the road we normally took too—and it's the car that I would have been in," Jones said. "The wife, the daughter, and the two sons of the same family, as well as four other friends, were killed by a train accident at a grade crossing."

A train had broadsided the station wagon, strewing car parts along the tracks. Ironically, the father of the family killed in the accident was the railroad's station agent in Jones' hometown.

The cause of the accident was never known, although Jones remembers the crossing was humped and approached by a curve, forcing cars to climb and curve at the same time. He surmises the children were talking and screaming and the driver never heard the train.

"After that, I thought, 'We've got to stop this,' "Jones explained. Safety has concerned him ever since.

"I enjoy rail," Jones said. "I've always enjoyed rail. I just want to make it better. That's what I try to do to: To make it the best possible."

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