Subject: Re: Safety issue

All-

My team and I have been called out multiple times to E.E. Bluff 1 for the switch starting to throw under trains. This switch is new and had a S Hook attached to the stand to put in the dog catch to prevent this from happening. Every time that we responded to this switch, the S Hook was missing from the switch stand in which it was securely attached to. We replaced the S Hook once and the last time put a 105 lock on the switch. Today as my inspector was walking the track he noticed the S Hook in the creek adjacent to the switch. I am not sure if these are unpopular with the crews or not, however, we need to ensure that they are using them and not taking them off and throwing them. I am not blaming the switch crews as we do have individuals that walks the tracks. Just asking you all to talk to the crews and ensure they are not removing these and make sure we are using them.

Thank you,
Kota Patton
612-512-8952
St. Paul RDM

Please spread the word in Lacrosse as well. Your crews see this switch more than ours probably.

I am sure that we all know this but as a reminder, if the switch is equipped with a lock or hasp and not used it would be considered a 617-1 ops exception corresponding to GCOR 8.8 as the rule for reference.

8.8 Switches Equipped with Locks, Hooks or Latches

When not in use, switches must be locked, hooked, or latched if so equipped. Before making movements in either direction over these switches, make sure the switch is latched or secured by placing the lock or hook in the hasp. However, when making train movements in facing point direction, lock the switches equipped with a lock.

Replace any missing or defective switch locks. If they cannot be replaced, report the condition at once to the train dispatcher, yardmaster, or supervisor in charge, and spike the switch if possible.

617 Operating Switches and Derails

OBJECTIVE

This test is conducted to determine employee compliance with rules related to operating switches and derails.

APPLICABLE RULES

GCOR and MWOR 8.2, 8.3, 8.8, 8.12, 8.20; GCOR 14.10; SSI #43; TYSR, MWSR, MESR and EMSR S-13.7, S-13.7.1, S-13.7.2, S-13.7.3, S-13.7.4; MESR, EMSR S-13.7.6 and S-13.7.7; CROR 104, 104.5

PREPARATION / PROCEDURE

This test can be conducted any time an employee is engaged in the activity of operating a switch or derail. Areas of focus include:

617-1 Operating the Switch or Derail

The employee stops equipment:
- Before fouling the adjacent track until the hand-operated switch is properly lined for the movement
- At least 50 feet from the switch to be lined when possible
- At least 100 feet from the derail (except in engine servicing areas)

The employee before operating the switch or derail:
- Looks in both directions for approaching equipment
- Insures equipment is not damaged, locked or spiked
- Views that switch points are free of ice, snow or other material and does not use their hand or foot to remove foreign material

The employee while operating a switch or derail:
- Is alert and exercises caution for a potentially sudden release of energy due to a switch that may be under compression, etc.
- Uses good ergonomics and lifting practices
- Maintains balance and control with slow and even effort
- Repositions as needed to maintain balance and control

The employee ensures that the switch is:
- Locked, hooked, or latched if so equipped when not in use
- Latched or secured by placing the lock or hook in the hasp before making movement over the switch in either direction
- Locked when making train movements in facing point direction when equipped with a lock

The employee ensures that the derail is:
- Placed in non-derailing position to permit movement
- Left in the derailing position regardless of whether cars are on the track they are protecting on auxiliary tracks other than sidings
- Locked in non-derailing position on sidings having hand-thrown derails except when engines or cars are left unattended
- Secured with lock (or hook in in hasp) when so equipped