

# TransTopix

Fall 2014



Nurturing our cultural belief: We are eager to learn, eager to teach

Summing up summer: Abundant summer work kept more Transystems employees on the job

From seed to sugar bowl: Harvest signals the beginning of another sugar beet campaign

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## President's Corner

# Always eager to learn, eager to teach

One of the cultural beliefs of Transystems is “eager to learn, eager to teach.”

Transystems offers a variety of formal training programs for all members of the team. The programs range from brief “eLearning” sessions on computers to comprehensive technical training in formal classroom settings.

Company-provided training is just one part of the learning culture at Transystems. Even more important to learning at Transystems is a workforce eager to share tips about how to work more safely and productively.

That informal “teaching” is so common that often we do not realize that we are teaching. When a driver warns others about deer in the area, that driver is teaching. When one technician shows another a better way to weld, that technician is teaching. When a seasoned clerk shares with a new clerk some of the tricks about how to complete a job more quickly, the seasoned clerk is teaching.

Teaching by someone who has done the job is more effective than teach-



Scott

works best when both parties are eager participants in the process. If I know something that I would like to share, I will be more likely to share when I know that my idea will be received with enthusiasm. The converse also is true.

One might ask: “How do I let people know that I am eager to learn?” Perhaps the best way is to listen. People recognize listeners and are willing to share knowledge with listeners.

In the Spring 2014 edition of *TransTopix*, I wrote about the importance of communication and the role the annual listening sessions at the end of sugar beet campaigns. Transystems managers are involved in a training program designed to improve their listening skills. They and everyone else at Transystems will benefit from your feedback and teaching.

ing by someone who only has read or heard about how to do the job.

Sharing of knowledge

### **Cultural Belief and Supporting Statement**

**Leader of Safety:**  
I take action and respectfully address unsafe acts and conditions.

**My Voice Will Be Heard:**  
I seek information, listen to others and share my ideas.

**Own It:**  
I choose to stay above the line and always ask, “What else can I do?”

**Innovate:**  
I explore and share my ideas.

**Unleash Potential:**  
I am eager to learn. I am eager to teach. I am eager to grow.

Learning and teaching are especially important at this time of year. We have lots of new people who are eager to learn about Transystems. We also have lots to learn from our new people. Let's not miss the opportunity.

*Scott Lind,  
President and COO*

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# Safety rooted in learning, teaching

Company's culture encourages sharing of information

**L**earning and teaching are at the core of Transystems' safety culture.

Rich Carl, Vice President of Safety, has felt for years that Transystems needs a better system for determining the causation of losses. About a year ago, the safety department, with the help of the company's Technical Writer, began developing a loss reporting form that gathered information through a series of questions and controlled responses. The new loss reporting form evolved into a complete system of analysis.

The new electronic Loss Reporting System is a good example of both learning and teaching. The loss reporting form "learns" by soaking up lots of valuable data. The system that runs the form analyzes the data to determine the causes of a loss and then "teaches" by suggesting corrective actions to avoid similar losses in the



Rich

future. The Loss Reporting System is not a safety robot that is a substitute for common sense judgment. The system supplies consistent, reliable data that provide the basis for making decisions that respond to the actual, rather than perceived, causes of losses.

Transystems views the safety committee as another opportunity both to learn and to teach. Safety committees analyze data about recent trends in losses and make recommendations about corrective actions.

Safety committees also look ahead to operating conditions and special risks in months ahead. Safety committees help the company plan to address those safety challenges. Safety committees participate in building communications to teach employees

how to deal with the changing working environment.

The safety audit process also involves both learning and teaching. Every time an employee completes a safety audit the company learns something about its safety status. At times, the company cannot alter an unsafe condition, in many cases the weather, but the company can teach employees how to perform their work while addressing the unsafe condition.

Teaching and learning for safety go beyond company programs.

Changing weather conditions present the perfect opportunity both to teach and to learn.

Seasoned employees should share their experience with employees who have less knowledge about how to deal with the challenges of difficult weather and working conditions.

New employees should be eager to learn from the experience of the seasoned employees. A variant of an old aphorism applies here: "A wise man learns from the experience of others."

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**ON THE COVER:** The massive Holmer harvester got to work in mid-September in the Idaho Division. Rion Sanders photo

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# Managers are first in line to learn

**E**ach of Transystems' 14 projects depends upon well-trained managers. In turn, those managers depend on Director of Learning Jake Larson to keep them up to speed on company policies and procedures.

Since taking the job in June, Jake has been gathering and reviewing company policies, standard operating procedures and existing curricula.

"We have great materials. I'm gathering all the data now, including curricula, policies and standard operating procedures, to build an improved program for our managers. I'm getting my ducks in a row to provide the best training possible," he said.

Teaching comes naturally to Jake. Before joining Transystems six years ago, he spent four years teaching in middle and high school settings in Minnesota. The University of North Dakota graduate earned two degrees: an undergraduate degree in Social Sciences and a Master's degree in education.

His education will be put to good use educating Transystems managers. "When we have better managers, they will be able to better



Jake

serve our biggest asset, our employees," he said. Jake's goal is to help ensure that managers have the right tools to be successful.

"We need to give managers as many tools as we can to get the job done," he said. "It's important that we prepare managers to lead their projects and make sure they have different ways to approach problems. If your only tool is a hammer, all problems look like nails."

Increasing efficiency is another of Jake's overall goals. "Efficiency is a big part of a safe project. Everywhere I go, I talk to people who want to get the job done. Drivers want to get the miles on that truck. Loader operators don't want to stand around. They want to work."

"Our employees want to get the job done without hassle or frustration. It is the manager's job to help them succeed at that and it's my job to make sure the managers have the training, tools and information they need to do that."

Technology will lend Jake a hand in achieving his

goals. While he travels to the company's far-flung projects from his base in Grand Forks, he also plans to develop online training programs that will accommodate the managers' hectic schedules.

"I'd like them to be able to train online when it fits their schedules," he said.

Leadership training for new and second-year supervisors and managers also is part of Transystems' program. Each spring, 15 to 20 managers and supervisors undergo this training. In June each year at the Service Center, Transystems provides week-long training sessions for all managers and supervisors. These sessions provide up-to-date direction and information to the company's leaders.

It pays to train.

## Training the trainers

**E**ach and every Transystems employee receives training every year, and it's up to John McCann to train the trainers who get that job done.

The company's Director of Training travels to each division late in the summer to conduct training sessions.

See **TRAINERS**, next page

# Trainers

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While the basic instruction on how to train employees is similar each year, John up-



John

dates and customizes programs, adapting for cultural differences and providing techniques trainers can

use to deal with diverse personalities.

This year, John trained 63 trainers who will, in turn, train more than 1,000 employees, including some 850 to 900 drivers, 160 loader operators and 50 technicians. Three dozen clerks and 50 supervisors or managers also will go through the training programs.

Training is geared to help each employee understand his or her specific job tasks. Further specialized training also is provided.

“Each year during start up, many hours are spent training employees on safety topics, OSHA and MSHA recurring training materials to meet required compliance training,” John said.

The Division Safety Managers conduct eight-hour safety orientations for each project.



**Two CDL training courses were held in East Grand Forks this summer.** Joseph Phillip photo

Project Managers conduct rehire orientations, loader training, task training and provide new information required for the new campaign.

Training does not end when the campaign begins. “Since 2007, we have teamed up with the Mastery online training program to provide recurring training topics while our employees are working during the campaigns,” John said. “The Mastery program provided us a great service over the seven years by introducing us to online training.” This year, John found an even better way to do the online training.

This fall, Transystems moved to the Vivid Learning Systems Program (eLearn-

ing).

“The Vivid Learning system provides us greater access to current FMCSA training materials which are automatically updated as new FMCSA rules are published. The Vivid system also provides us access to more Spanish training materials to support our growing number of Spanish-speaking employees,” John said.

“The many hours we invest in classroom and online training over the years have helped reduce our safety losses both in vehicle collisions and personal injuries,” John said. “That goes hand in hand with providing each of our employees quality information to accomplish his or her job.”

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# Training produces confident employees

**P**aul Project Manager Coral Torix is convinced that the company's training program is essential.

"I can't say enough about how important training is," Coral said. "If you are insecure in your job, you won't do it well. Being comfortable and confident in your job as a driver or operator is vital. As long as people are trained correctly and taught how to do the job, things run smoothly."

Coral has a long history as a trainer. She trained transport operators in load securement so that loaders can be moved safely from pile to pile. She taught transport operators how to load the machines onto lowboys and properly secure the machines.

She worked with John McCann to create training videos on the proper way to load sugar beets.

Coral has acted as a mentor for new supervisors in Idaho and is excited to see Jake Larson come on board as an educator for managers and supervisors.

"There is no reason for anybody to fail if given the proper training," she said. "When I started, supervisor training didn't exist. It was 'sink or swim' and often set



Coral

up people to fail. It was just go find your way and hope you succeed." Jake will change that.

Although Coral has been instrumental in helping several projects during start-up, this was the first year she was totally in charge of her own project at the beginning of the campaign.

"I'd never done a start-up by myself. I decided we were going to be prepared at start-up in Paul. I wanted to make sure everybody knew how to do their jobs and do them right."

With that in mind, Coral got an early start on training. New operators started training with our best operators clear back in the third week in July. Running a Holmer is difficult and those operators needed consistent training.

"When we started our campaign in September, all our operators knew what was coming and they were ready for it," she said.

"Start-up went very well in Paul. Everybody was confident in their job at start-up. One of the smoothest start-ups I've been involved

with," Coral said.

Safety training never stops in Paul. Coral holds impromptu meetings at shift change to hear what the drivers and operators have to say about safety and how things are going.

"I find out what we are doing well and where we are falling short right then and there," she said.

Coral gathers a wide variety of opinions and gets a different perspective. There are formal safety committee meetings once a month.

During start-up, rehire meetings are held and company policy and procedure is reviewed with all returning drivers.

Division Safety Manager Ryan Fiala runs the new hire meetings. In those meetings, he lays out the way we do business. We sit down as a group with the new hires and let them know we are always available to address their concerns and that safety is our No. 1 priority.

Often new drivers are uneasy when they come on. To help them overcome that initial anxiety, Coral pairs them with trainers who ride with them for a couple of weeks.

Two of the project's newest drivers came to Coral

**See CONFIDENCE, next page**

# Training puts qualified drivers behind the wheel

**T**raining is essential to the achievements of any business, according to East Grand Forks Project Supervisor Sean C. Scott. “A good company like Transystems takes the time to develop the potential of its employees. One way a company encourages improvement is through training,” he said.

Sean stepped up this summer to oversee two CDL classes offered by Transystems in East Grand Forks.

“The training was offered to any safe driver who had an interest in becoming a professional truck driver for Transystems,” he said. “Although there were more than 100 applications submitted, only 20 of the most qualified were selected.”

The course placed em-



It took a team of trainers to run the CDL classes in North Dakota this summer. Back row, left to right, Sean Scott, Gary Bergman, Bruce Jacobson, Clyde Opdahl. Kneeling, Mike Lusk, Chuck Hunt, Joe Phillipp. Not pictured: Ray Deleon, Robin Novak, Josh Kayle, Kevin Higdem.

phases on the basic functions and operation of a commercial vehicle and included extensive training in properly entering and exiting the ve-

hicle, pre-trip inspections, backing maneuvers, turning and cornering techniques and vehicle speed and brak-

**See CDL, next page**

## Confidence

Continued from Page 6

in July before they had earned their CDLs and asked for help and advice. They got both.

After passing the written part of the test, Coral and her trainers worked with the new drivers, setting up a driving course in the yard and teaching them how to conduct the FMCSA walk-around in-

spection that is part of the test. Although Transystems sugar beet trucks in the Idaho Division don't back up as part of everyday operation, Coral made sure the new drivers knew the proper way to back up in order to pass the test. They got their CDLs in August and spent two weeks with another driver.

To make sure everyone got up to speed this fall, Coral

chose four new trainers to add to those she already had, bringing the number of driver trainers to eight and operator trainers to three.

“I choose people who want to teach and are safety conscious,” Coral said. “They care about helping others. I pick people who will do a good job and succeed.”

They participate in a Train-the-Trainer class run by John McCann.

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# Trainer's reward: A class full of gratitude

**W**hen the East Grand Forks project decided to conduct CDL training this summer, Project Manager Rick Larson knew just who to call upon.

Longtime Transystems linehaul driver Joseph Phillipp spent more than two years training drivers at the local technical college. Over the years, Joseph taught more than 80 people how to operate safely and properly a commercial motor vehicle. Joseph had a 90-plus percent success rate.

With more than 3 million accident free miles under his

belt, he had plenty of knowledge to share with the two CDL classes held in East Grand Forks.

Nineteen students undertook the training with Transystems and received CDLs.

"We took students and taught them from scratch how to operate a commercial vehicle," Joseph said. "We taught them everything they need to know to pass the CDL. And they did."

The classes included international workers, men and women.

"Some of them had never even touched a commercial motor vehicle. It was my pleasure to teach them how

to take command and control of a 90,000 pound vehicle," Joseph said.

While the students were rewarded with CDLs, Joseph's reward was different.

"I bet I heard, 'I never thought I could do this,' hundreds of times," Joseph said. "Watching students struggle and then succeed makes me feel good inside."

He was particularly touched by trainees from Ethiopia and Kenya. "They left their place in Africa and came here to better themselves and their families. I was fortunate to be part of enhancing their lives," he said.

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## CDL

Continued from Page 7

ing control.

These are basic skills needed to pass the state required road test.

In his second year with Transystems, Sean came to the company with many years of CDL training experience. He has a third party national instructor certification through the Commercial Vehicle Training Association (CVTA) as a Master Instructor. He also attended the Transystems sponsored Train-the-Trainers course.

"It really helped me to understand the training and safety culture within the company," Sean said.

The effects of training go beyond the task at hand, according to Sean.

"Training sessions the company administers allow us to locate a wider range of people with the kind of outlook that matches the company mission statement," he said. "The right kind of perspective is a hard thing to cultivate, whereas workplace specific proficiencies are easier to nurture. The other advantages I see our training sessions paying off is it offers an improved retention

rate. Employees are more loyal to companies that value their growth and want to cultivate it."

Drivers and operators are offered help beyond the company's required start-up safety orientation.

"I noticed the drivers and operators came to the projects for a day of refresher and familiarization training, which allowed a reconnection to the company's equipment and standard operation procedures before harvest," Sean said. "That also allowed for a successful introduction of the new CDL training graduates into the Transystems culture."

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# Company's summer projects wrapped up

**F**ar-flung projects kept Transystems employees hard at work through the summer months.

Two large North Dakota projects and a handful of smaller projects in Idaho and Wyoming kept record numbers of employees on the payroll.

Transystems employees from all 14 projects turned up to work in Watford City and McKenzie County, ND.

From the end of May until mid-September, dozens of Transystems drivers, loader operators and managers bustled on the Watford City, ND project.

"We had a full boatload of drivers and even put on some extra trucks. With more drivers than the job called for, we were able to work efficiently, quickly and safely," Steve Torix, Rocky Mountain Division Manager said. "We had a great response from all of the company's Project Managers. They got their employees to head to western North Dakota for the summer."

"We were running 27 trucks, day and night, throughout the summer and finished with an outstanding safety record," Steve said.

While commending all those who pitched in at Watford City, Steve singled out



Some 100 Idaho division drivers worked through the summer on projects near and far. They were part of the crew that worked in North Dakota and also undertook construction hauls in Idaho and near Jackson Hole, WY, above. Jason Strunk photo

Project Manager Ryan Moore and supervisors Aaron Woolman, Corey Dalzell and Ken Whitney for the outstanding job they did in North Dakota. "I'm super proud of those four guys," Steve said.

Good weather and few rain delays contributed to the success of the job. "We hauled to our customer Knife River's satisfaction," Steve noted. "We filled up everything we could before we left. We hauled to grade every day. Knife River is a good bunch to work with."

"Everybody there did a good job. All in all, it was a great summer," he added.

Troy Carl echoed that sentiment talking about the McKenzie County project 25 miles down the road from Watford City.

Thirty-eight drivers with a

support crew of technicians, laborers and clerks got the McKenzie County project wrapped up on time despite a delayed start in June.

"Drivers from the Watford City project pitched in to help us meet our deadline," he said. "We appreciate their help. It was huge."

There are plenty of thanks to spread around.

"We really appreciate all the people who went out for summer work. Everyone pitched in to make it successful," Troy said. "Our driver trainers were a key part of getting new drivers safely on the road."

Troy singled out first time Project Manager Eric Escobedo, night shift manager Eric Nephew and Safety Supervisor Virgil Purrington for praise. "They ran a tight ship," Troy said.

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## History

# From the start, we've learned from each other

First beet trailers set company's training programs in motion

**T**ransystems' entry into the sugar beet hauling business called for lots of learning and teaching.

The sugar beet trailers were unique.

Bottom discharge trailers had been in use for many years but only for dense, heavy materials such as gravel.

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### Editor's note:

This is another in a series of articles about the history of Transystems.

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Mike Rice designed trailers that were long and tall in order to provide enough cubic volume for lightweight sugar beets to make up a viable payload.

These tall trailers had a center of gravity higher than bottom discharge trailers used to haul gravel and other dense, heavy materials.

The new trailers also included hydraulic systems new to Transystems.

The new trailers presented challenges to drivers and

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*Transystems' entry into the sugar beet hauling business would not have succeeded but for people who were willing to learn and willing to teach.*

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technicians.

In 1968, a few drivers and technicians learned to handle the new equipment delivering sugar beets to the Hardin, MT, factory of Holly Sugar Corporation.

The start-up at Hardin succeeded and, in the fall of 1969, Transystems needed to transport Holly's sugar beets at Hardin and Sidney, MT, and at Worland and Torrington, WY.

Transystems had 32 units (tractor, lead trailer and pull trailer). In order to make the hauling operation viable, the four factories needed to share the fleet.

Transystems stationed a few units at each factory and moved the balance of the fleet from south to north during the campaigns.

In those days, drivers did not follow equipment.

That meant a lot of teaching and learning with new drivers.

The initial cadre of drivers tackled the task of traveling to each new project to teach new drivers how to handle the unique equipment.

The training program succeeded because the teachers were dedicated and the students were eager.

Transystems faced a similar challenge when the company began loading sugar beets into the tall trailers.

A small group of operators learned how to load the trailers and then fanned out to train other operators.

Technicians were quick to figure out how to maintain the new equipment. They did so in adverse conditions because none of these seasonal projects had an indoor shop. Technicians still share knowledge about how to do the job in those circumstances.

Transystems' entry into the sugar beet hauling business would not have succeeded but for people who were willing to learn and willing to teach.



Rion Sanders photo

## Know any good welders? Refer and earn a \$500 bonus

**T**ransystems Manufacturing Project in Twin Falls, ID, is looking for a few good men and women, and the company wants to pay employees to help find them.

Manufacturing has openings for welders and maintenance technicians. To earn a \$500 bonus, current employees need only refer

a job candidate to Project Manager Derek Torix.

After the welder or tech candidate is hired and has worked for only 45 days, the referring employee gets the bonus.

All company drivers, techs, clerks, operators, welders and laborers are eligible for this bonus.

Call Derek at 208-735-8539.



Transystems manufacturing project is building eight new 53-foot trailers for the Minnesota Division. Derek Torix photo

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## Division Reports

# Hard work, planning pay off in RRV

**T**he Sept. 5 campaign start-up in the Red River Valley Division was the best we have had in years. It took plenty of hard work to make it



Troy

smooth and well organized. Our managers invested a lot of time in training beforehand and it really paid off for us.

The Red River Valley sugar beets were planted a little bit later than usual this spring and we were short on heat early in the growing season, but favorable weather in the early fall really turned the crop around. We should be right around average tonnage when we finish hauling beets in May.

Pre-harvest went very well. We had all the units we needed to keep our customer supplied. It was a stress-free start to the campaign. As we move into full harvest, our staffing levels are significantly better than last year. I'd like to welcome Jason Holm and Robin Novak to our project management



**Transystems is busy delivering beets to sugar factories in the Red River Valley. Rion Sanders photo**

team.

Jason is the new Project Manager in Moorhead and already has made significant improvements. His hard work is appreciated. As a team leader, Jason is making Moorhead a stand-out project. Moorhead also welcomed two new supervisors, Shane Bakken and Shannon Colsen.

Robin is the new Project Manager in Crookston. Under Robin's leadership, the Crookston project operated the first month without

a loss. Wow! What an accomplishment.

We had a busy summer, wrapping up the McKenzie River project only a couple of weeks before we rolled into pre-harvest in the Valley. I appreciate all the hard work our drivers, loader operators, technicians and clerical staff put in to make summer successful and the start of harvest smooth.

*Troy Carl, Vice President  
and General Manager, Red  
River Valley Division*

## Division Reports

# Minnesota welcomes international workers

Sunny skies, favorable field conditions and the arrival of more than 20 international workers to lend a hand got Renville's main harvest off to a great start.

Pre-harvest was a little wet and we had to jump around a bit, moving our equipment from area to area. After that



Mike

moist start, this year's harvest is a thousand times better than the conditions we grappled with last year.

We are on track to wrap up the campaign on time in mid-April, bringing in a slightly larger than average crop of just under 3 million tons.

I am very proud of our local staff for providing a warm welcome to our new international workers from Mexico. Those new drivers are family men who came north to provide better for their families. They are happy and proud to come to Minnesota to work for Transystems. Their skill level is first rate.

Julian Espinoza and Humberto Morales, our two bilin-



Renville sets the company standard for fun at a picnic. From digging for dollars, above, to manager dunking, left, there's family fun for all of our employees and their families.

gual trainers, stepped up to welcome the international workers and to make sure they understood and completed the company's safety training programs. Every time I asked Julian or Humberto to help out, they did. That's the kind of attitude that makes us successful. We are bridging the culture and language gap and working as a team.

We added trucks to increase our hauling capacity. That means we are looking for a few more drivers than usual.

The team is looking forward to eight 53-foot trailers coming our way from the

manufacturing project in Twin Falls. We are excited to see the new trailers and put them to work. Manufacturing worked hard to give us a good product and we appreciate it.

Renville's summer maintenance program went off without a hitch. Our equipment was ready to roll when harvest started and so were our people. More than 20 of our drivers worked through the summer on the North Dakota projects and the Kane hot oil haul. It is nice to keep them on the payroll year-round.

*Mike Rood, Manager,  
Minnesota Division*

## Division Reports

# Start-up was stellar in Idaho Division

**F**or men, women and equipment, there was no time off in Idaho between summer work and the beginning of the sugar beet campaign.

The final trucks rolled off construction projects in Wyoming the first week of September and rolled right on to sugar beet harvest

Sept. 10.

We literally brought trucks back and put them right to work.

There was little down time for our

employees since nearly 100 Idaho Division drivers worked through the summer on in-state projects and others in North Dakota and Wyoming.

The short time between the seasons put pressure on our maintenance staff. That is when Dirk Torix and his maintenance crew showed their true colors. They worked hard and racked up some overtime to get the trucks turned around and ready for the harvest. We appreciate the extra



Kevin



**James Swenson and Jean Morris teamed up to bring in the beets in Idaho.** Kevin Iversen photo

effort they put forth.

With more than 90 percent of our staffing positions filled, we had a great start up and are filling the factories with beets. Safety, as always, was our main focus. We went a long stretch without a single loss.

With expectations of a near record harvest, we started hauling beets a week earlier than expected on the Nampa project, which will run into the first week of February. The other projects should be wrapped up by the end of March.

One new cleaner loader brings the total to six in Idaho. The cleaner loaders and new harvester are hard at work. The ten new Volvo

tractors we added to the fleet are working out well.

Jim Woodward moved from the Boise Project to become Project Manager at Nampa and is doing an outstanding job there.

We continue to meet the fluctuating needs of Alta-Fab, moving more structures during October than in any month since the project began.

Crews in American Falls, Paul, Twin Falls and Nampa took a little time off to gather for company picnics. Everyone had a good time and we are now focused on a good, safe sugar beet campaign.

*Kevin Iversen,  
Vice President and General  
Manager, Idaho Division*

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## Division Reports

# Worland looks forward to exceptional season

**G**ood beet growing weather and a full roster of drivers and loader operators set the tone for a great start up in Worland.

We thought we might get a head start on the campaign, but the growing weather was so good that Wyoming Sugar wanted to get a few more tons in the field by sticking to the traditional first week in October start-



Steve

up date.

The outlook is good for a near record-breaking crop in Worland. If it's not the best crop ever, it'll be right up there. All the growers and our customer are happy with the crop.

Sidney is fully staffed and working hard on what looks to be an outstanding crop.

Veteran Worland drivers Jean Sulzbach and Craig Tinlen will be rolling through the campaign in a new truck, a real bonus for them and for us. We are real proud of our new equipment.

We also are proud of the great job all of our employees did for Knife River on the Watford City project this

summer. Ryan Moore did an outstanding job as Project Manager with great back up from Aaron Woolman and Corey Dalzell.

Loader operator Ken Whitney really stepped up during the summer work. He came in as a substitute manager and ended up as night manager when we needed him most.

At our Sept. 16 picnic, we celebrated a great summer and looked forward to 100-plus days of hauling beets.

We hope to wrap up the campaign safely and on time in mid-January.

*Steve Torix, Manager,  
Rocky Mountain Division*



**The first day of the campaign in Worland went well. A near record-breaking crop is expected this year. Ryan Moore photo**

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# Innovative thinking keeps wheels turning

**A**t Transystems, innovation is not found only in the field. The information technology and administrative teams that keep the wheels turning behind the scenes strive constantly to find better ways to do their jobs and make fellow employees' jobs more productive. They share the company's goal of being fully staffed and work to help achieve it.

"When we are not fully staffed, everyone is focused on that need," Dan Brennan, Vice President Information Technology and Revenue Equipment, said. "This limits time for many other activities. We focus a little less on procedures, training, and just plain observation. This is often at startup, a time when we need these things the most."

IT's job is to build tools to help folks make decisions and be efficient. This year, IT created and implemented a new group of hiring tools. That is where innovation comes into play.

With IT focus, Dan and his staff implemented a cloud file share service using SharePoint. The file share service allows managers, supervisors, and administrative staff to find, use, and collab-



Dan Brennan, vice president of information technology and revenue equipment, says that the new Contact-App makes it much easier and faster to access and use. This also allows clerks and managers to share documents that traditionally would be passed back and forth via email.

Dan gave an example using a driver schedule. There would be many versions of a document. Some would get lost, others may be confused. We now have none of the traditional onsite servers or administration that go with this type of service. With the SharePoint system, the documents are backed up, secure, and easily accessible. The system also is more cost effective.

"You can't beat that," Dan added. "I believe this will also help staffing activities."

Another recent IT related staffing idea came from Jessica Harris. Named the Contact-App, it captures the basic information from a potential employee: name, position of interest, and phone number.

It took a team to get the

orate on all manner of documents. For example, policies and training material are

much easier

and faster to access and use. This also allows clerks and managers to share documents that traditionally would be passed back and forth via email.

job done. The Contact-App team included Stacy Radovich, Jodie Hunt, Tim Plumley, Mike Rood, Troy Carl, Ryan Moore, Kari Franks and Dan Brennan.

"We created an online application system for potential employees and released it this fall," Dan said. "The biggest driving force here was the applicant. Previously, our online application was very difficult for many to use. That system could not ask questions that we needed."

With the new Contact-App, project locations get an email in real time about the individual applicant. The project can monitor progress of the application.

"We call folks to follow up on their experience and make sure they do not have any unanswered questions," Dan said.

"One story I heard about recently garnered a technician that we would not have known about in the past," he said. The individual started an application online, but got discouraged in the process and decided not to apply. During a follow up call, we reached the spouse of the individual and talked about Transystems and our

**See INNOVATE, next page**

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# Innovate

Continued from Page 16

opportunity. The applicant was interviewed and hired.

“In the past, we would not have known about this individual and the failed visit to our process,” Dan said. “They would not have known about us either. This process is also leading to improvements to the tools employees use online to apply for a position. Our new system is simple, compliant and user-friendly.”

Innovation keeps people excited about their jobs. Anyone at Transystems can share an idea that leads to big changes.

“I have witnessed it personally,” Dan said. “With the repetition in the type of work we do, a seemingly small idea can have a huge impact.”

Innovation often has a positive impact on everyone. Some examples include increased wages, improved safety, fatigue reduction, better care of customer product, and much more.

“One important point I learned early in my career at Transystems is that you can make a mistake and survive it,” Dan added. “This is part of what fosters our innovation culture here. I have made my share of mistakes.

I led a few large projects that did not work at the end. (These ideas worked perfectly on paper of course!) I found that these failures led to more ideas that eventually had greater success than we could imagine at the start. If I had been afraid of the failure, the success would not have come.”

## Finance department improvements

Vice President of Finance



Ann

Ann Powers has seen plenty of change during her 45 years with the company.

“Innovations that I have seen over the

years that impact the finance department are not innovations related to equipment but rather improvements and stream lining of processes,” Ann said. “Many of the improvements are a result of our \$200 cost saving challenge at the Great Falls Service Center.”

Three improvements stand out in Ann’s mind when it comes to contributing to the company’s goal of being fully staffed.

The first is the reduction in lag time between the last day

of the pay period and payday. “There was a time that it took two weeks to process timecards and cut payroll checks,” Ann said. “Now, the pay period ends on Saturday and employees are paid the following Friday.”

Another improvement is payroll direct deposit.

“Although this is not an internal innovation, it was new to Transystems,” Ann noted. Employees no longer have to worry about getting the check to the bank.

Finally, Ann mentioned improvement in the employee activation process.

“In the past, the activation process could take several days to complete. Often times we would lose an employee because he or she found another job in the meantime,” Ann said. “Now, once an employee’s hiring paper work is routed, the employee is activated and the employee could be in a truck the same day.”

## Administrative staff hard at work

Transystems administrative department employees are focused on innovative methods to hire and retain employees, Kari Franks, Senior Administration Manager, said. “Across the company people are asking,

**See INNOVATE, next page**

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## From seed to sugar bowl

# Harvest is a team event in the RRV

**Editor's note: This is the second in a series that will follow the production of refined sugar from the seed to the sugar bowl.**

**I**t takes a team, a big team, to bring in the Red River Valley's sugar beets.

When full harvest begins in early October, 739 growers using some 5,500 trucks scurry to haul more than ten and a half million tons of sugar beets to American Crystal Sugar's factories and piling stations.

Most beets do not go directly from the field to the factory. The massive harvest

must be carefully managed to maintain quality and ensure a steady, consistent supply to the factories that process sugar through the winter and into spring.

That careful management begins months before the first beets are pulled from the ground. ACSC relies on its agronomists and ag operations and agronomy managers to oversee the crop from pre-planting to pre-harvest.

Typically planting in the RRV begins the third week of April, Dan Gowan ACSC Director of Agriculture, said. This year was not typical, with much of the crop

planted in May. Throughout the summer, all eyes are on the crop.

The agronomy staff turns in tonnage estimates July 1. Those estimates are usually very close to the final crop size, Dan said. In August, hand-picked sugar beet samples are taken from randomly chosen fields throughout the valley. Each of the two dozen agriculturists in the field takes about ten samples from their fields. One sample is not enough for ACSC. The agriculturists conduct samplings three times in August and once again in September.

**See RRV HARVEST, next page**

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## Innovate

Continued from Page 17

‘What else can I do to make Transystems a great place to work, and how can I share my opportunity with others?’” she said.

Here are some of the innovative ways the administrative team is answering those questions.

Transystems started using Craigslist to post employment openings. Project Clerks change these postings weekly and post daily so our employment opening shows



Kari

at the top of the list. Administrative staff members were involved in the creation of the new Contact Application. We also can analyze which advertisements generate the most contacts. Taylor Waite, Administration Coordinator in Idaho, puts together the data from the

Contact Application hits for the entire company and emails the data weekly for the project recruiting and retention dashboards.

Jessica Harris, Recruiting and Retention and Division Administration Manager, worked with the senior operations managers to create a weekly recruiting and retention dashboard for staffing.

This dashboard gives the project and the division offices an accurate weekly picture of how they are doing with regard to filling their projects.

# RRV harvest

Continued from Page 18

Then comes the math. “Using the estimated crop, we start looking at acres to harvest, tons compared to the expected slice rate for the factories. The plan is to finish slicing beets in mid-May,” Dan said. The ag team works backwards from that date to determine when pre-harvest begins.

“The decision to start pre-harvest is one of the most risky,” Dan said. “Start too soon, and slicing is finished in April and cost/ton of processing will cut into grower payments. Start too late, by underestimating the crop size, and the factories run into June which is way too late.”

Using all the information gathered by the agronomists and ACSC employees in the field, the call to start pre-harvest is made.

Pre-harvest, which begins in early September, primes the sugar factory pump, supplying enough beets to get the factories up and running. About 11 percent of the crop is taken during this period.

“Once a date to start factories has been established, we put together a pre-harvest schedule. All the sites are divided into four groups, with each taking a turn to open fields. The four groups rotate from first to last over a four-year period,” Dan said. Each



Once harvest begins in the Red River Valley, Transystems focuses on keeping the factories supplied. Rion Sanders photo

## RRV beet facts

- Earliest pre-harvest in the valley’s history started Aug. 14, 2012 to deal with a record crop of 11.2 million tons, 27.1 tons per acre.
- How much sugar? ACS long term average for beet sugar content is between 17 and 18 percent. The 2012 crop averaged a record-breaking 19.2 percent. Sugar content is relative to moisture at harvest time. Rain water dilutes the beet sugar content, but makes the beets heavier.

harvest group has an approximate two ton per acre quota to deliver for pre-harvest.

Early groups deliver less than those closest to full harvest. ACSC does not decide where the beets come from for pre-harvest. Members of the four groups make that call.

## Full on harvest

The next phase of harvest is brief and intense. From Oct. 1 to Oct. 24, main harvest runs full tilt. That’s

when hundreds of growers using thousands of trucks are hauling beets from their fields to 105 pilers at 37 pile sites. Transystems units pick up the beets to take them to the factories.

The supply of beets to the factories never stops. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, Transystems delivers. During pre-harvest, two shifts of about 80 drivers haul the beets. When full harvest kicks in,

**See RRV HARVEST, next page**

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# Beet harvesting is a three-step process

**T**echnology has given sugar beet growers a big boost in the past decade.

“Not that many years ago, we saw nothing but four- and six-row defoliators and harvesters,” Dan Gowan said. “Today they use mainly eight- and 12-row equipment.”

The actual harvesting of a sugar beet is a three-step process: defoliate, top and lift.

The defoliator takes the first pass. To remove the green beet tops, the defoliator has a series of drums which rotate over the beet rows. “It disassembles and shreds the tops to near nothing at all,” Dan said.

Some defoliators are equipped with scalper systems which cut a silver dollar size slice off the very top of the beet. The crowns carry with them impurities which can affect the quality and payment for the sugar-

beet crop. This also helps remove any green leafy areas which could cause a rejected load at piling sites.

After the topper has passed, the harvester comes along to lift the beets from the ground and shed the dirt that clings to them before loading the trucks.

“It is very important that the harvester is set correctly for conditions so that the maximum amount of beets and minimum amount of dirt make it into the trailers,”

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## RRV harvest

Continued from Page 19

which it did Oct. 1 this year, more than 250 drivers are needed to feed the factories.

And nothing halts it. If a factory shuts down, Transsystems trucks and trailers are reallocated to other factories to keep the beets moving. Red River Valley Division Manager Troy Carl works with Dan Gowan to ensure that no assets go unutilized when a factory is down.

In the dead of winter when weather is the biggest threat, the road trucks may be forced to shut down because of hazardous conditions. Even that does not stop the supply of beets to the factory. Yard beets are moved to the factory during even the worst weather condi-

tions.

The movement of beets from field to pile grounds and on to the factories is, and must be, a well choreographed routine.

“Our plan is to have growers’ trucks on our site for less than 17 minutes to unload,” Dan said.

During the early part of harvest, particular attention is paid to the sampling process which begins at the scale. “Nearly 40 percent of all loads delivered are sampled for quality and tare, which is the amount of dirt on the beets,” Dan said.

“We have very good soil here, but we don’t want to buy real estate. We are buying beets.”

And lots of them. Some 525,000 loads of beets will be delivered during harvest.

As trucks unload, 15 to 22 pound samples are taken and placed in bags. Each sample bag is ticketed to track information about quality and sugar content. This is how growers’ payments are determined.

All quality samples from the entire Red River Valley are processed at a laboratory in East Grand Forks. The quality lab processes some 224,000 samples on seven lines.

“It is very complex and must be very specific to ensure that growers are properly paid for crops they actually grew,” Dan said.

*ACS Director of Ag Dan Gowan was born into the sugar beet business. He grew up raising sugar beets and joined ACS as an agriculturist in 1981. He has been Director of Ag since 2012.*

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# Balance key to successful harvest in Idaho

**H**arvest is a balancing act in Idaho, and it is one that The Amalgamated Sugar Company and its agricultural staff has perfected during the quarter century John Schorr has spent with the company.



John

From planning to planting to harvest and to the factory flume, as Corporate Director of Agriculture, John

keeps a close eye on the 181,800 acres planted in sugar beets. That is a lot of acres to keep track of, and John relies on three district managers, 20 crop consultants and a handful of agronomists and researchers to keep him up-to-date on the crop's progress.

Harvest is the culmination of more than a year's worth of planning that starts each year in early December.

"That's when we start getting annual planting agreements signed by our growers," John said. "The next step is visiting with each of our 580 growers to find out which fields they

will plant, which varieties of beet seeds they will need and what type of fertilizer is required."

John's team gets a head start on the fertilizer question in the fall when Amalgamated offers free soil testing to its growers.

With agreements signed, the first beet seeds go into the ground early in March. Planting continues through the end of April, with peak planting season running from April 1 to 10.

"The earlier we can plant, the better," John said. Once again, it is a balancing act.

"We must balance the risk of frost and bad weather with the need to get the plants growing leaves to get photosynthesis going," he added.

Then there is the issue of water.

"One hundred percent of the sugar beet crop in Idaho is irrigated," John said. Planting is always based on water availability. Water flowing down the canals of Idaho comes from the rivers, reservoirs and deep wells. Growers own water rights but must wait for the water districts to determine how much water each grower will get.

"Any time you have irrigation, you will have challenges," John said.

## Making the call on the crop

During the growing season, crop consultants make three crop estimates: June 1, July 1 and Sept. 1.

Using the July 1 estimates and lots of advice and input from ag managers and his experience, John sharpens his pencil and starts figuring. It's backward math at its trickiest. Assessing the size of the crop, John and his staff determine what dates the factories need to open in order to complete sugar processing by March 20.

"We take the estimated number of tons of beets and work backwards so things wrap up the third week in March," he said.

Many factors go into that equation. Crop size, road conditions, factory capacity and shipping distances all play into the final decision.

"Our crop consultants are good at their estimates," John said. "Once in a while we'll be surprised, but not too often."

Crop consultants base much of their estimating on growers' histories.

While farmers are ever optimistic that this year's crop will be far bigger than last year's crop, that is not usually the case, John said.

**See IDAHO, next page**

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# Idaho

Continued from Page 21

Crop size is consistent year to year.

“Technology can and does boost the overall yield,” he said. “New beet varieties and methods have an impact.”

A typical harvest for Amalgamated is 6.3 million tons or 35 to 36 tons per acre. “Sometimes it is less. Sometimes it’s more,” John said. “Sometimes a grower may have a yield as high as 50 tons per acre.”

## Let harvest begin

Oct. 6 is the date regular harvest begins in Idaho. That is when the piles start being built.

“Before that, in early harvest, it is hand-to-mouth to feed the factory,” John said. “This time of year we are processing the early beets as soon as possible,” he added.

Two or three percent of Amalgamated’s growers take advantage of Transystems newest tool, the Terra Dos T3 harvester, which in one sweep defoliates, tops and digs the beets.

The rest of the growers are responsible for bringing their crops to 74 piling grounds operated by the company.

It is hard work bringing in the beets. A typical machine usually will harvest 600 to 800 acres per season, John said. A good day for a six-row harvester is 30 acres.

Bigger, 12-row harvesters can harvest far more.

Until the beets roll across the scale at the piling ground, they belong to the farmers. Once across the scale, they are the sugar company’s property. Crop consultants keep track of that property. Crop consultants each manage two to four stations. A foreman and trained crews run the stations during harvest.

At the pile grounds, trucks are weighed as they enter and when they leave to determine the weight of the beet load. Customarily, a 25-pound beet sample is taken from every third load, for a 30 to 35 percent sample rate. That determines tare and sugar content of the load. Growers are paid based on weight and sugar content.

“That’s how we decide the piece of the pie the grower gets,” John said.

All of the samples go to Paul where the lab works around the clock all through harvest. Tests there determine how much dirt is on a load of beets and the sugar content of the beets. The lab is busy, running 7,000 to 8,000 samples a day.

Back at the pile grounds, time is of the essence. “Once on the piler, we ask that the growers unload within three minutes,” John said. “During peak days, we can unload as many as 29,000 trucks in a single 12-

to 14-hour harvest day. One piling ground received 2,000 loads in a single day. We see a lot of trucks.”

Before harvest kicks in, each grower is assigned a station near his fields. Amalgamated’s staff know the quantity each station can handle and equip it appropriately.

## Who’s on first?

Determining which beets move to the factories and when is one more of the Ag Managers’ balancing acts. Some beets are moved simply because more room is needed at a pile ground. Other beets are first in line because the pile fails to store well and the beets are at risk of deteriorating. Then the managers factor in road conditions, distances, and the availability of Transystems units to move the beets.

“A lot goes into the decision. It’s based on history and observation. And we always go after a pile if it heats up,” John said.

*John Schorr grew up on a farm near a large city in Utah and returned to it after completing college. When the city grew to engulf the farm, John went to work for U&I, a sugar company. “They closed their doors the year after I went to work for them,” John said. He then worked for nine years in the asparagus industry. In 1990, He signed on with The Amalgamated Sugar Company.*

## Spotlight on employees

**W**hen one member of the Transystems family needs help, you can count on the rest of the family to rally round. That's what happened in Renville when driver Al Brown was diagnosed with cancer. The Southern Minnesota crew stepped up to help him out. A benefit featuring a pulled pork feed, silent auction, open house, 50-50 drawing and bake sale was held in mid-October.

Many drivers participated in a "donate a load" fund raiser.

The division's new international workers, none of whom had ever met Al, proved they were truly part of the Transystems family. Every international worker donated a load, Division



Manager Mike Rood reported.

Transystems matched the funds raised by employees and the Brown family received a check for \$9,957.25.

Al stops by the shop between chemotherapy treatments, Mike said. "He is in good spirits and always says, 'Save some beets for me, Mike.'" We will.



**TOP: Co-workers and friends rallied round driver Al Brown when he was stricken with cancer.**

**ABOVE: Al and his wife Tonia received a check for more than \$9,000.**



## Good news

**F**or Barb Albro, doing a good deed is its own reward. But this year the longtime Special Olympic supporter got even more from her participation in the Pedal 4 Medal ride. She got a new bicycle.

For the past four years, Barb has raised money through pledges then climbed on her bike to pedal a minimum of 25 miles.

"This year we did a short ride under the moon. It started at 10 p.m., lit up by glow sticks, head- and tail-lights," she said. "It's fun. I can't wait until next year."

Participants who raised more than \$1,000 were entered into a drawing for a bike. Special Olympic Athlete of the Year Josh Anderson, pictured with Barb, drew her name to win.

Congratulations, Barb.

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## Happy Birthday!

### Addison Irene Teel

#### November

1. Edward Carlson, Mark Hanson, Edward Lavallie, Paul Selke.
2. Danielle McNew, Lee Patterson.
5. Vance Hendrickson, John Jones.
6. Michael Hughley, Richard Nord.
7. David Moore, Larry Warner.
8. Nicholas Leach, James Wishart.
9. Tamra Harbaugh, Timothy Rec-  
tor.
10. Noe Jarquin.
11. Channing Wolfe.
12. Alfred Aragon.
13. Christopher Van Dyne.
14. Stacy Buchl.
15. Mike Ault, James Snustad,  
George Steinmetz, Timothy War-  
ren.
16. Edgar Carranza, Blair Ross.
17. Douglas Chutich, Robert Clark,  
Gary Ward.
19. Dwayne Bratten.
20. Dale Beckler.
21. Russell Baker, Brain Clark,  
Mark Unruh.
23. Clark Sheldon, Ricky Waker.
24. Todd Ison, Daniel Lietz, Tim  
Plumley.
25. Anthony Lot.
26. Scott Pederson.
27. Robert Amerine, Kylene Hagen.
28. Christopher Bly, Howard  
Mather, Leo Monson.
29. Echo Jackson.
30. Michael McIntire, David Pugh,  
Suzanne Spade, Steven Trow-  
bridge.

#### December

24. Todd Dahl, Russel Oyler.
5. Taylor Waite.
6. Joe Jensen.
8. Lyle Wang.
9. Aaron Woolman.



**Nolan and Brandi Teel welcomed their first child, Addison Irene, Oct. 27. She weighed 7 pounds, 2 ounces and was 19.5 inches long.**

11. Travis Johnson.
12. David Crawford, Isia Molina  
Ruiz, Curran Rice, Tracy Ridley.
13. Steven Fazekas, Eric Prynne.
14. Joseph Phillipp.
15. Kimberly Dilworth, Robert  
Hill, Gary Roehl.

16. Billi Connett, David Gausman,  
Lucas Slagter.
17. William Salfar.
18. Eric Valencia.
20. Tchatchibara Ayeva.
21. Gregory Marlette, Floyd Mose-  
ley.

22. Jerry Stenseth.
23. Charles Christians.
25. Stephen Franke.
27. Jesus Nimer, Denis Taylor.
29. Roger Mott.
30. Jaide Schoenen.
31. Nicholas Bowman, Armandina  
Salinas.

#### January

- January
1. Robert Chambers, Noor Hassan,  
Luqman Mahdi, Ben Purrington,  
Gilbert Splum, Abdihakim Sulub.
  6. Penny Hoover.
  7. Michael Hanson, Ronald Hen-  
nessee, Hamed Mujic.
  8. Mahonri Crane, Jodie Hunt,  
David Smith.
  9. Kirk Gunnell.
  10. Richard Carl, Bradley Murphy,  
Frank Narloch.
  11. Virgil Purrington.
  12. Dennis Whittle.
  13. Kevin Iversen.
  14. Dorothy Beasley, Danielle  
Clark, Donald Plante.
  15. Deanna Thomas, Barbara  
Zavala.
  16. Stacie Leland, Denise Vil-  
lanueva.
  18. John McCann.
  19. Sandra Richard, Nolan Teel.
  20. John Bannert.
  23. Verl Hunter, Patrick Paulson.
  24. Richard Jones.
  25. Asael Simmons, Scott Wilson.
  26. Kirk Ellingford, Robert Teeter.
  27. Jerry Loveless, Ronald Weir.
  28. Dion Lagunas, Carylon (Jean)  
Sulzbach.
  29. Samuel Canite, Rodney  
Hagen, Tim Hull, Lewis Maynard.
  30. Rocky Braegger, Ryan Fiala,  
Francisco Martinex, Jeffrey Rieke.
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