

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for November 8, 2015. Cold and darkness may have descended outside this week but warmth and glowing spirits emanated from within. So, let's keep the warm spirits glowing by getting this update fired-up.

Spirits were high on Tuesday evening as Gene Peck, Pat Scholzen, Cliff Hayes, Frank Werry, Mike Harris, Heather Kearns, and Alan Hardy gathered for an evening of MOW fun. As the controls for the turntable on the BEB-17 ballast regulator are mounted on the exterior of the machine, Cliff fabricated a protective cage for them. We don't need anyone yanking on these controls – especially the latch – at less than ideal times. Frank retrieved a 55 gallon drum of red-diesel to fill the tamper's tank. It has been used quite a bit lately and was very thirsty. Heather filled jerry-cans of diesel then topped-off the front-end loader and back-hoe. The big project going on in the Erecting Shop was the replacement of the rubber buffers on the work-heads of the tamper. As the work-heads on this machine vibrate violently as they lower into the ground to squeeze rock under ties, these buffers prevent them from shaking apart. As they age, the rubber hardens and crack. It's a bit of a complex process to replace these buffers as this was not designed for easy maintenance (same with most of our machines). While Gene and Alan engaged in an in-depth discussion of the replacement plan, Mike H. climbed into the deep reaches of the machine to remove the cracked buffers on the back of the work-heads. This was a tool-heavy job and, like surgeons in an operating room, various tools needed to be passed back and forth, in and out. Pat managed this process as Alan and Mike worked on opposite sides of the work-heads. By evening's end, the job was complete and the tamper was ready to roll. Good old fashion volunteer expertise saves the day.

Thursday, the Weed Team headed to Baths to make sure no wayward vegetation will interfere with the proper spotting of Santa's Village on the Auxiliary Track (East Spur). Mike Taylor and Heather pruned trees and applied Garlon to 16 stumps. Mike T. officially declared that, "Progress is being made." Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Frank, Alan, Heather, Frederick Carr, Cliff, and Mike H. made progress on a variety of projects. Cliff got the protective cage installed over the turntable controls on the ballast regulator. Heather, Frank, and Mike H. took on the replacement of broken slats on the gates around the bed the mighty MOW truck. Several had split and needed changing. This project was not quite as straight forward as initially anticipated. But, of course they got it done. Indeed, progress was made on Thursday.

The delightful aroma fresh sugary fried-dough goodness kissed the cool morning air inside the Erecting Shop on Saturday. Alan, Heather, Steve Nemeth, Clem Meier, Frank, Jose Gomez, Fred, and Michael Florentine made quick work of the pink box's contents before heading out on the line to finish up the track leveling project between Mile Posts 2.7 and 2.9. Steve hopped up into the front-end loader with its bucket load of track-jacks. Alan revved-up the tamper for its journey across the UP Mainline. Heather gathered up the rest of the crew in the mighty MOW truck. Before you could say, "Chocolate Old-fashion," Clem and Fred were digging out space under the base of the rail so that Mike F., Frank, and Jose could set jacks. Heather set the track-level in place, and the jacks were being cranked-up raising the west rail. Alan, in the tamper, rolled in. The work-heads with their new rubber-buffers were back up to 100 percent efficiency as they squeezed the rock under the ties. Jose, Frank, and Clem pulled jacks as the tamper approached. As you might surmise, the Team has gotten really good at track-leveling. So much so that the EIC woefully over-estimated the amount of time needed to finish up. By mid-morning, we were done, jacks and tools packed up, and looking for something else to do. So, after a quick conference, the Team moved north to Switch 14, the north Miller Park Switch. Our trusty Track Inspectors had written it up a defect where the west point was not fitting snugly against the stock-rail. In fact, it higher than the stock rail. Part of the problem was that the transit-clip was coming into contact with the first tie south of head-block when thrown to the siding. Since the track-jacks were on hand, they were employed to shove the offending tie about an inch south. Then, west rail was jacked-up and the tamper brought in. Tamping a switch requires a very delicate touch as there are so many components that we didn't want interacting with the violently vibrating tamper tines. Alan was the right person to have at the controls. After two passes, success was declared and the defect deemed corrected. Then, the lunch bell rang. So, the Team complied.

After lunch, it was back to Old Sacramento and the Central Pacific Passenger Station (CPPS) tracks to replace another cracked joint-bar on that 61½ pound rail. Because this stuff is so small, most of our track-tools don't work on it. Also, our supply of replacement bars, bolts, lock-washers, and nuts is limited. So Heather, Steve, Jose, and Mike F. used crescent-and-box-wrenches loosen the nuts. They were pretty frozen and it took quite an effort to take this joint apart. Once the bolts were removed, wedges were needed to pry the joint-bars from the rails. Through perseverance, the joint-bars came off and the replacement brought in. The joint deemed repaired. When we work in Old Sacramento, we have the opportunity to interact with the public and interpret what we're doing and our railroad. Interestingly, this is some of the oldest active rail on the SSRR. Some of these ancient sticks date back 129 years to 1886. Others were forged in Sheffield, England making the SSRR a truly international railroad. With that, the time had come to pack up the truck and return the tamper to the Erecting Shop. Conductor Heather conducted it across the UP Main. Meanwhile, Steve took the loader back to the Boiler Shop. It was a good day.

This coming week, the Tuesday and Thursday Shops crews will have full and free access to the Erecting Shop starting at or before 5 o'clock p.m. Also Thursday, the Weed Team will install the sharpened blades in the chipper then take the man lift to Setzer to prune several trees. Meet at the Shops at 8:30 a.m. Saturday will be another day of great success starting with fresh doughnuts at 8 o'clock a.m. in the Erecting Shop. Come on out and join the fun. This is a fantastic Team of individuals doing great things for our Railroad. It's a pleasure and privilege to be associated with such fine folks. Many thanks for all you do!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



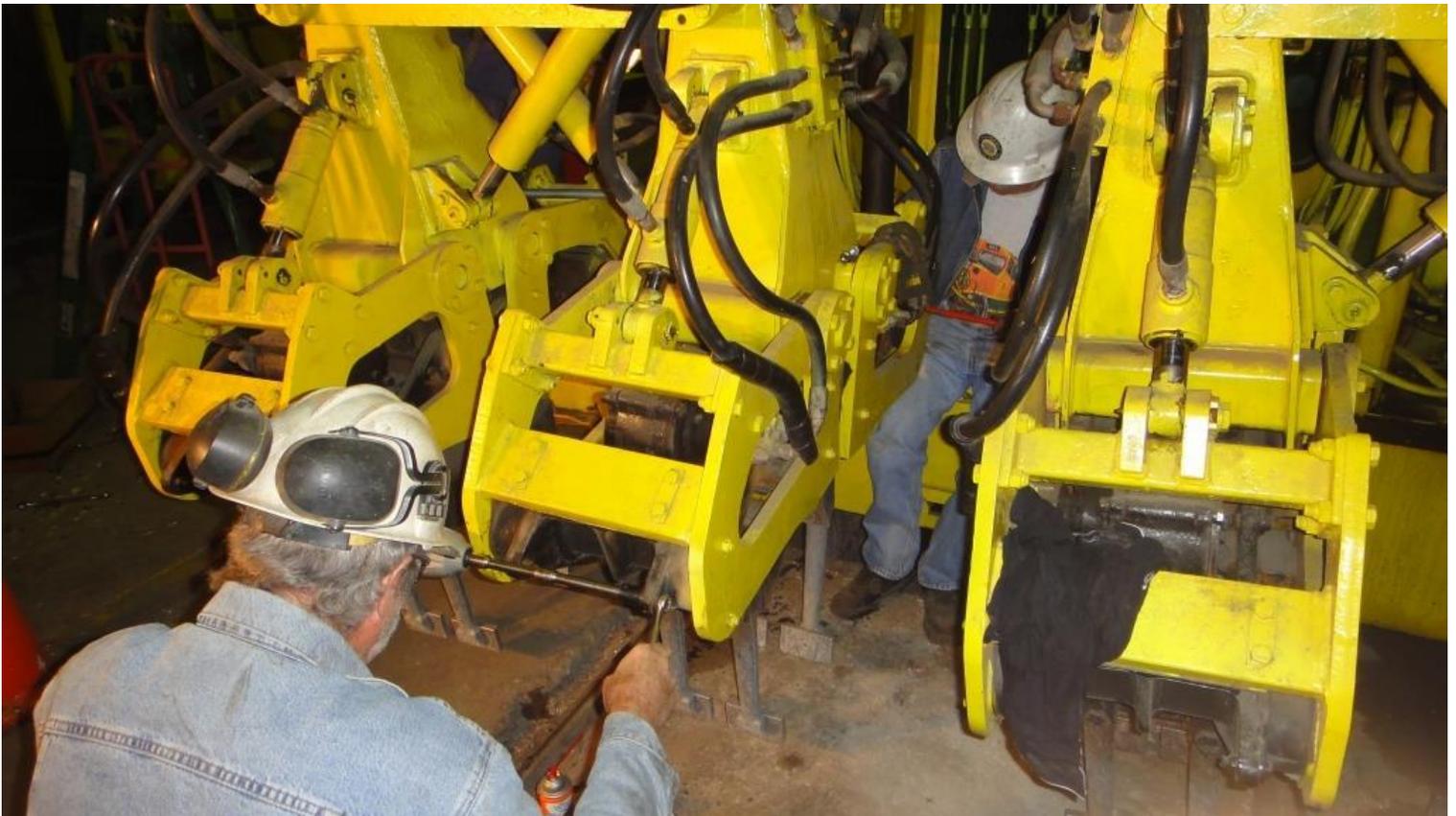
Mike H. climbs into the deep reaches of the tamper to remove cracked work-head buffers



Frank fuels the tamper



Cliff building a protective cage for the turntable controls on the ballast regulator



Alan and Mike H. work on opposite sides of the tamper's work-head to replace cracked rubber buffers



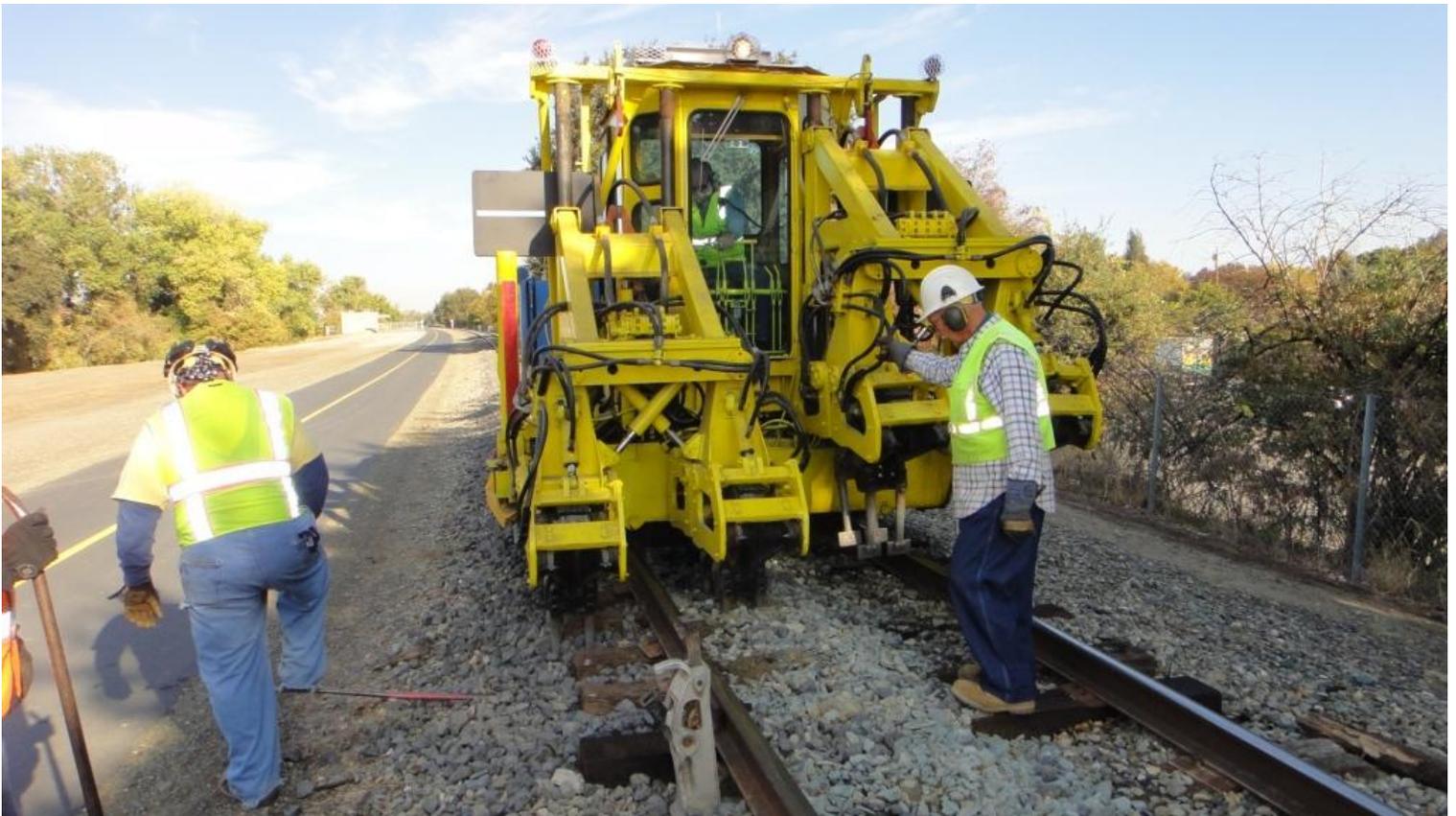
Steve in the loader brings jacks to the work site which Frank deploys



Jose jacks-up the west rail as Heather checks the level



Fred and Clem dig-out the ballast from under the base of the rail so jacks can be set



Clem guides Alan in the tamper as Mike F. nips-up a tie



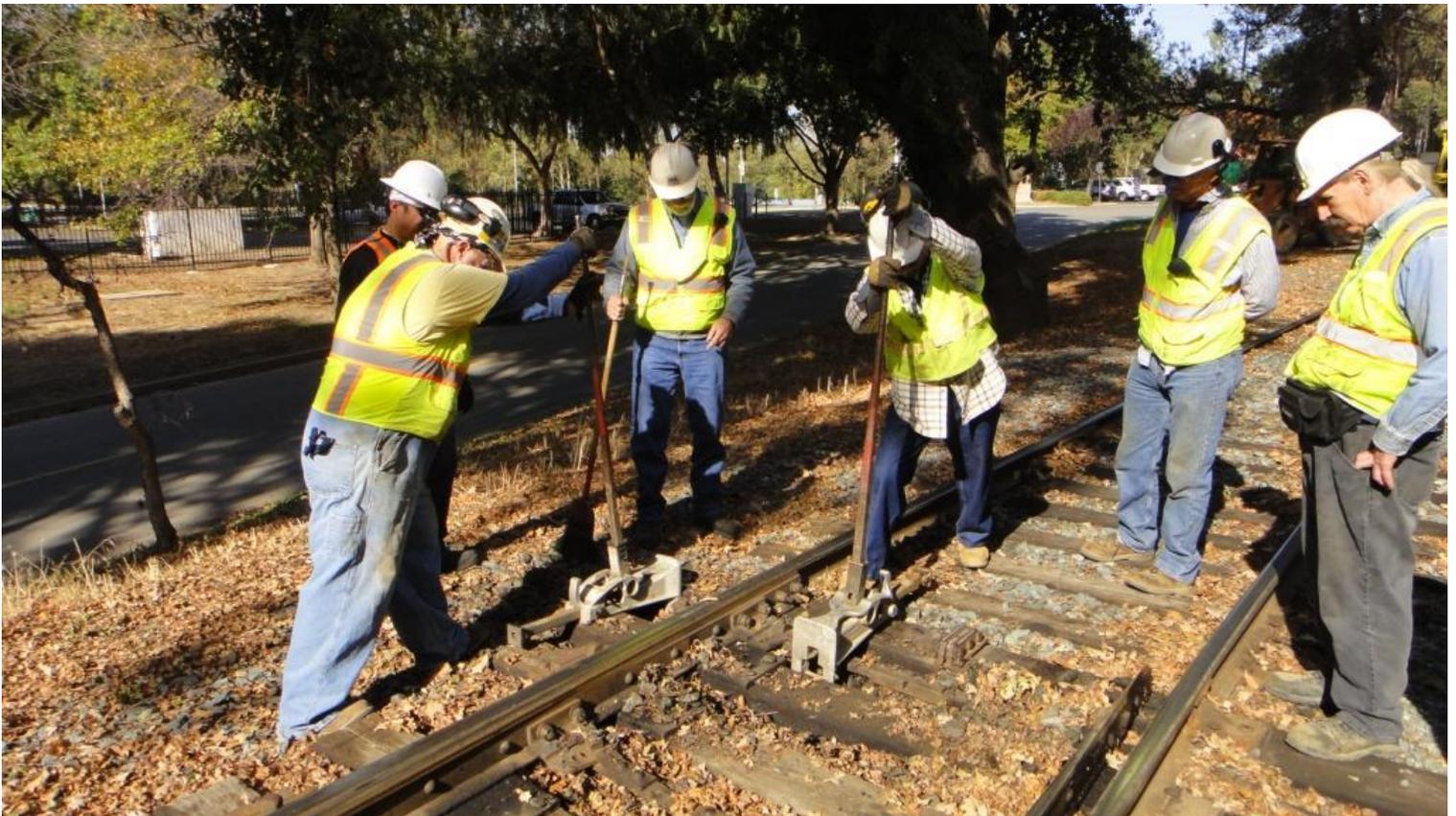
Frank and Jose pull a jack as Alan tamps the rail to the new level guided by Clem



At Switch 14, a jack is placed horizontally against the head-block and the offending tie to shove it slightly south



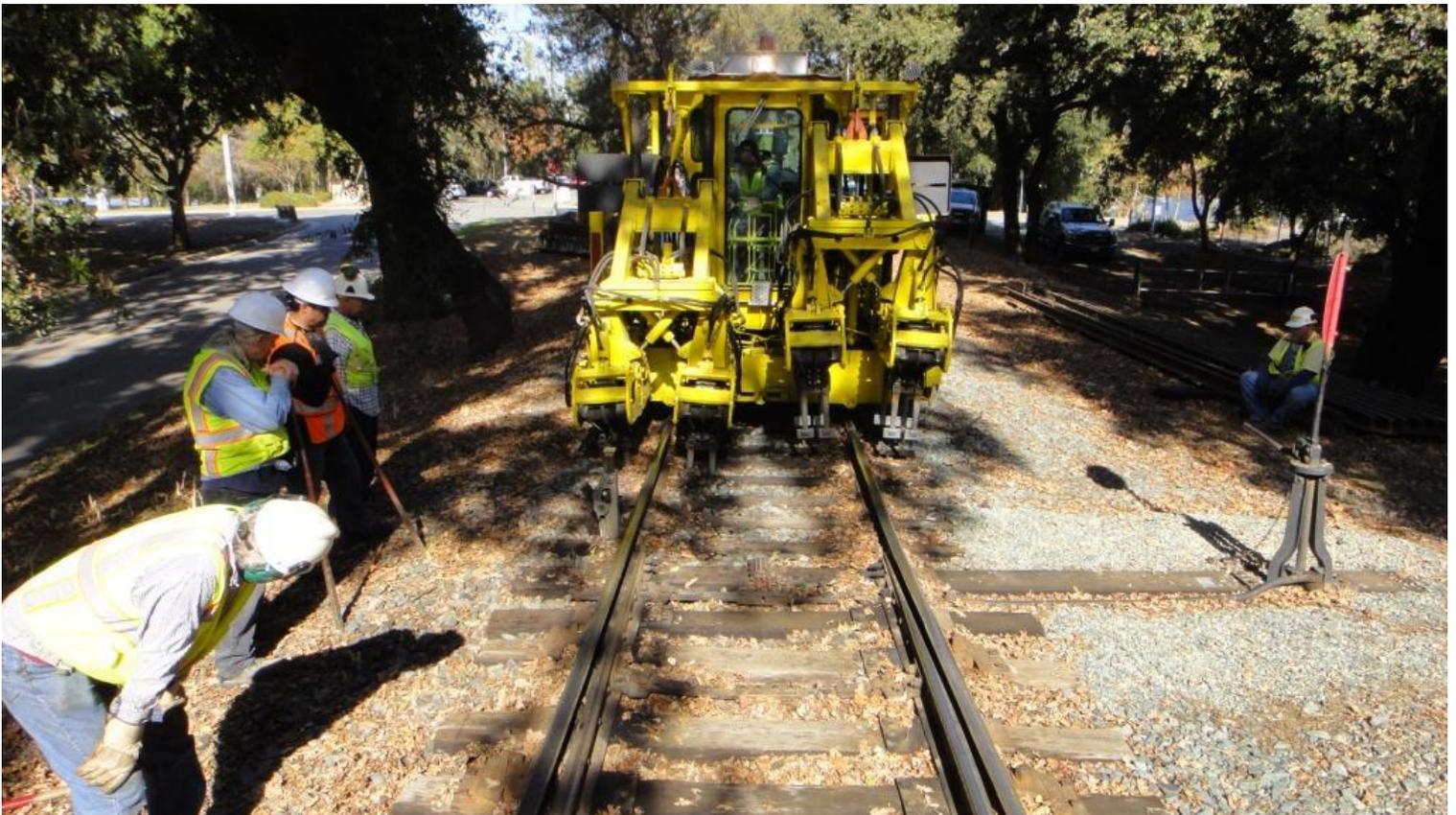
Steve gets the second jack snug in place



In a coordinated effort, Mike F. and Clem crank on the jacks



Now jacks are set under the west rail to jack it up so that the west-point will slip into place under the head



Alan tamps the west rail to the new level. And, yes, we were very much aware that the points were floating. That was done on purpose and the tamper's approach to the points was very closely monitored by Steve, Fred, Jose, and Clem



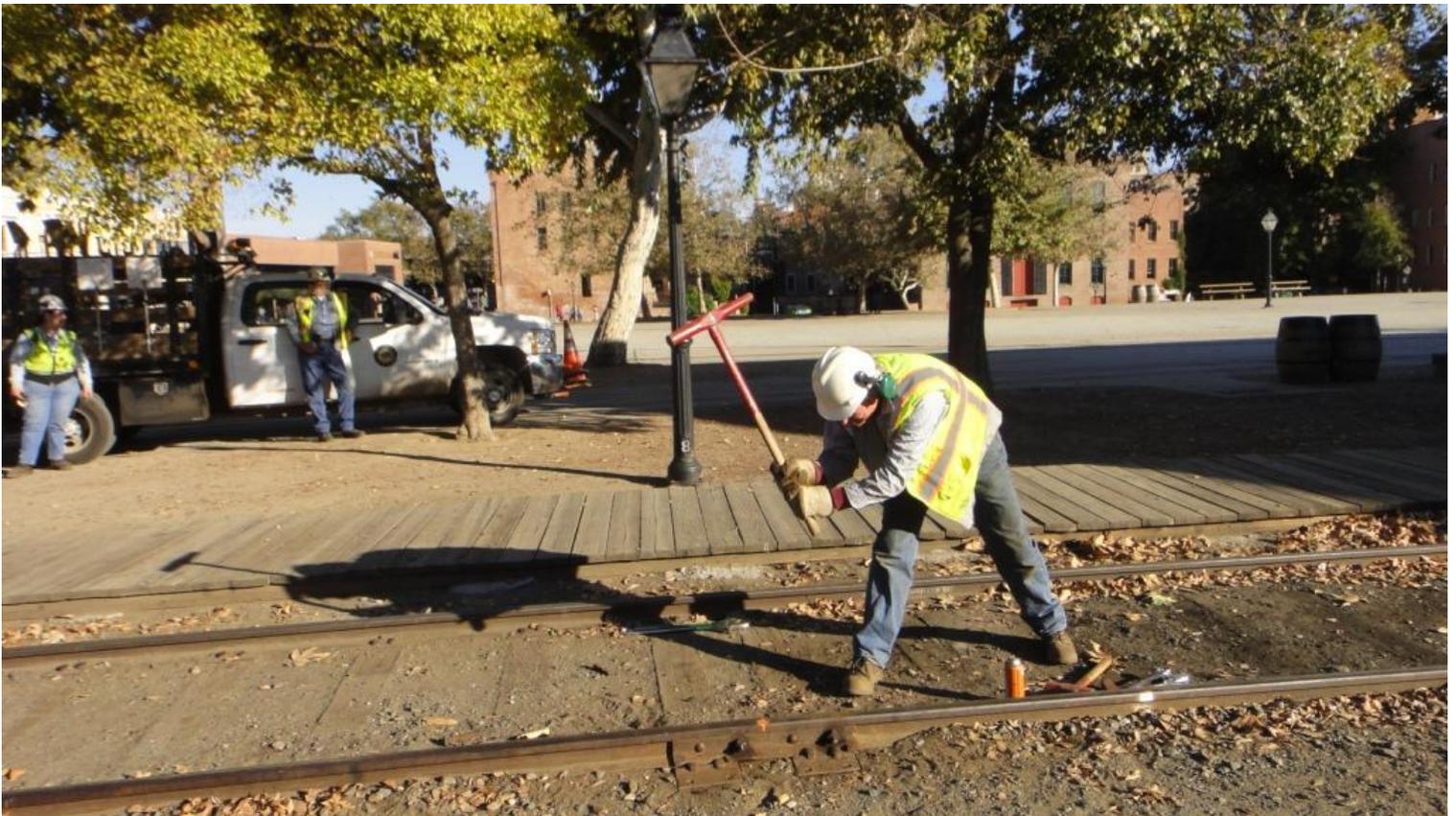
Back in Old Sacramento, Mike F., Steve, Heather, and Jose take apart the joint on the CPPS Track with the cracked joint-bar



Mike F. holds a wedge in place while Jose hits it with a whacker tool to pry the joint-bar away from the rail



Steve and Jose reassemble the joint



Steve demonstrates his world-famous as-seen-on-TV windmill spiking technique



Interpreting our railroad: a stick of 61½ pound rail forged in 1887 by the Charles Cammell & Co, of Cyclops Steel and Iron Works, Sheffield, England



A 129 year old stick of rail forged by the Lackawanna Iron and Coal Company of Scranton, Pennsylvania in April, 1886