



# Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen

*A Division of the Rail Conference of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters*

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**W. Stephen Link**  
BLET Division 375 President and Vice Local Chairman

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Re: Carrier - provided lodging at Days Inn Civic Center - Roanoke, VA

Mr. Bryson,

Over the past year, members of BLE&T Division 375 have informed me and local transportation supervisors of numerous complaints with regard to the carrier - provided lodging facility, the Days Inn Civic Center in Roanoke, Virginia. We feel the location is unclean, unsanitary, poses unnecessary safety risks to employees, and is a substandard location in comparison to other lodging facilities in use by the carrier on this division.

About one year ago, this topic was brought before BLE&T Division 375 and our Local Chairman, Roger D. Wagner contacted Mr. Hale in Atlanta who handles lodging facilities for Norfolk Southern employees at away from home terminal locations. Mr. Hale informed Mr. Wagner that members should document any defects and problems they found with their rooms and inform the hotel staff of their findings, thus giving the motel management an opportunity to correct the noted defects and problems. Mr. Hale also told Mr. Wagner a site inspection visit would be scheduled for a later date, to determine if the conditions at the facility were suitable and if any defects or problems noted by NS employees had been corrected by the hotel staff.

Division 375 made a comment form available to all employees on the Danville District to allow them to communicate their concerns with the motel in Roanoke, VA and list any defects or problems they found while at the facility. Also, we told our members to relay their comments and concerns to the motel staff upon check out to ensure the motel was aware of any problems, thus giving them an opportunity to correct any problems.

A review of the forms we have collected to date reveals several common concerns and defects throughout the facility, some of which are (but not limited to:)

- Mold spores and mildew present in the shower and bathroom areas
- Water temperature erratic and difficult to control
- Window curtains do not sufficiently block sunlight during the daylight hours
- Heating and air conditioning units do not function properly and filters are never cleaned
- Bed linens are dirty
- Bath linens are dirty, threadbare and have holes in them
- Showers and bathtubs are not cleaned or sanitized after each guest
- Second and third floor rooms have floors that do not feel solid under foot
- Balcony railings are loose and not sturdy
- Drinking cups in rooms are not sealed in plastic and are not in compliance with the Virginia Department of Health regulations

Some employees have informed me that they sleep in their clothes while being lodged at this facility due to the dirty appearance of the bed linens and that the linens are often populated with hairs foreign to their body. Further, some employees refuse to take showers at the facility due to similar concerns with the showers not being cleanly and having hairs present from the previous guests. Still, some employees have relayed to me concerns that they have developed rashes and or noticed bites as a direct result of being lodged in this facility and its persistent unsanitary conditions.

It should be noted that Days Inn Civic Center's owner / operator, Mike Patel, lives on site in one of the rooms at the facility. Mr. Patel's residence at the property should ensure he has a hands on approach to maintaining the facility since he can readily see first hand any problems or defects brought to the attention of the motel staff by NS employees.

I have personally addressed these concerns with D. Wood, Superintendent of Terminals – Linwood, NC, S.C. VanHoy, Trainmaster – Greensboro/Pomona, NC and J.B. Patterson –Trainmaster Lynchburg, VA. Other employees have relayed to me their accounts of informing division officers about the uncleanly conditions and general disrepair of the facility. The aforementioned officers have assured me a surprise site visit will be personally conducted by one or all of these officers, though neither Division 375 nor I have not been informed of such a visit by them to date. I have expressed my desire to accompany a carrier officer on a surprise site visit and offered to supply the visiting officers with the comment forms collected by this Division to assist them in recognizing the motel's defects and unsanitary conditions.

We were told that Assistant Superintendent of Roanoke Terminal, D.W. Woodlin has visited the site and "took no exceptions" to the facility, yet we do not know the extent of his visit, and we suspect Mr. Woodlin was not aware of the ongoing complaints obtained by BLE&T Division 375's comment forms. A few months ago, BLE&T Division 375 Local Chairman Roger Wagner again spoke with Mr. Hale about Mr. Woodlin's site visit to the facility. Mr. Hale quipped that Roanoke was an unusual situation or city, and the only other option for lodging T&E crews may be limited to a facility directly across the street which he referred to as a "trucker's motel." The Travel Lodge motel across the street to which Mr. Hale referred appears to be suffering a similar plight of disrepair as the current Days Inn facility. In essence we would be moving from one unsanitary and neglected motel to another. We find Mr. Hale's suggestion of limited motel options in a city the size of Roanoke preposterous.

Unfortunately, problems with the Days Inn Civic Center facility show no sign of improvement since we began documenting unsafe and unclean conditions to the motel staff. In fact, the disrepair and general neglect of the motel is worsening. Several significant incidents serve to illustrate the continuing decline and unnecessary increasing safety risk to employees being housed at this facility :

- An employee who was an occupant in room 167 awoke to the sound of running water emanating from his bathroom. When the employee inspected the bathroom, he found water streaming down into his bathtub from room 267's plumbing directly overhead.
- An employee staying in room 268 noted that the bed sheets appeared dirty and had a hole in them towards the upper portion of the bed. A week later the same employee received the same room at check in and noted that the bed sheets had the same hole in the same location. It is improbable and highly unlikely that this is simply a matter of coincidence, but is a clear example of the uncleanliness and neglect of the hotel staff and owner / operator to maintain the facility to decent standards.
- An employee who was an occupant in room 155 was called to work and subsequently took a shower. When the employee heard the smoke detector alarm, she discovered that the heater unit in her room was ablaze, as were the nearby chair, drapes, and carpeting. The motel staff was lackadaisical in their response to her call until they saw the blaze in progress and damage first hand.

- Regarding this incident, it should be noted that a few nights prior to this occurrence, another NS employee had stayed in this same room, and found the heater was inoperative. He was moved to another room at the facility. Between the time when the heater unit in room 155 was found to be inoperative and the time of the fire, repairs were made to the heater unit. Division 375 questions the qualifications of the person who attempted to repair the defective heater unit to operable status, and if these repairs were in fact performed by a certified, licensed, electrician. We strongly suggest to the carrier that the motel should have records of the time and date of such repairs, the nature of the repairs, who performed the repairs, and if the person was in fact a certified, licensed electrician.

Perhaps the most disgusting incident occurred *prior* to Division 375 initiating collection of comment forms. One of our members found a used condom towards the foot of his bed, which should have been furnished with fresh linens prior to his occupancy of the room. This incident only helps to further the notion that the motel does not routinely change the in room linens between each guest.

It should also be noted to the Carrier, many employees have expressed disdain of the general area or neighborhood in which the motel is located. Options for a nutritious meal, essential to a healthy lifestyle, are limited to reasonable walking distance and include McDonalds, Wendy's, Subway, Campbell's Sports Bar, a Chevron gas station and a Sheetz gas station. A more suitable location with more variety for healthy eating establishments exists 3 miles to the north in the vicinity of the Valley View mall area. Additionally, this general area offers more suitable facilities in which to house employees at their away from home terminal, which are more in line with the amenities and standards of cleanliness we enjoy and appreciate at other company provided lodging facilities on the Piedmont Division. This general location is only one half to one miles further in distance from the reporting location.

Following are a few example images provided to illustrate the conditions that are prevalent at the motel.



Room 233 with sock on floor from a previous guest. One could conclude that had the housekeeping staff changed the linens on this bed, they should have observed this item and removed it from the room.



View of sunlight streaming in to room 233 during the day with the curtains closed. This environment is not conducive to proper rest.



Many of the rooms have cracks around the door casing which allow light and air to seep in to the rooms.



The only light fixture in this bathroom was inoperative and one could reasonably assert that had the housekeeping staff cleaned this bathroom, they would have noticed the light was inoperative.



In the same room pictured previously (with the inoperative light fixture) is this view of a toilet which was running constantly and could not be flushed. The previous occupant left toilet tissue in the toilet. Again, the housekeeping staff should have noticed this if they had properly cleaned the room and reported this to the front desk, preventing another guest from occupying this room until the necessary repairs were made. This is unacceptable.



View of sink with Styrofoam cups which are not sealed in plastic and are not in compliance with Virginia Department of Health regulations.



View of North side entrance to main lobby of motel. The upper / top portion of the South banister / railing is not secured with bolts and is loose. Outdoor carpeting repair made with duct tape.



Second view of North side entrance to main lobby of motel. The upper / top portion of the South banister / railing is not secured with bolts and is loose and presents a safety hazard to anyone who uses it for support ascending or descending the stairway. **The banister / railing has since been totally removed rather than repaired.**



Image of stairway from first to second floor interior corridor which shows railing / banister removed from left wall and the remaining bolts (to which the railing was attached) covered in electrical tape.



Example of dirty chair in a room at the motel with stains and cigarette burns on the seat cushion. Also note the dirt and condition of the carpeting along the base of the floor.



As an example of disrepair and neglect, this electrical outlet behind the nightstand does not have the proper cover plate, allowing the wiring of the electrical box to be exposed.



One of the two elevators in the motel has been “out of order” in excess of a month.

As you can clearly conclude from the images and accounts presented herein, this facility is hardly suitable to house Norfolk Southern **employees who are our company's most valuable asset**. We are certain that other employees from the various departments whose duties require them to visit and stay in Roanoke on company business are not subjected to the rampant neglect and unclean conditions of this facility. We do seek **"fair and dignified treatment with equal opportunity"** to be provided with regard to lodging of T&E crews in Roanoke at a clean, well maintained facility with suitable options for food and recreation within a reasonable distance. Ask yourself if you would deem this location a suitable accommodation for yourself or your family.

We urge you to immediately remove us from this lodging location before someone is injured due to the lack of maintenance and incredibly low standards that exist at this facility. We also request that you will invoke the cooperation of the involved unions on finding a more suitable lodging facility for T&E crews in Roanoke.

W. Stephen Link

BLET Division 375 President and Vice Local Chairman