



**American Short Line and
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Watco Recognized by ASLRRRA for Exceptional Veterans Engagement Initiatives

2024 ASLRRRA Veterans Engagement Award to be presented at ASLRRRA's Annual Conference & Exhibition, March 25

WASHINGTON – March 22, 2024 – ASLRRRA today announced Watco as the recipient of the 2024 Veterans Engagement Award for their efforts to hire and retain employees that are veterans of any U.S. branch of military service, including spouses and family members. The company will be honored at the ASLRRRA Annual Conference & Exhibition in Kansas City, Missouri on March 25.

For ASLRRRA member Watco, U.S. military service members and veterans possess skills and values that resonate with the organization and its culture. Recognizing the connections between military members and Watco team members, leadership at the organization created a Military Outreach and Hiring Program in 2022 and added a dedicated military and veteran recruiter position in 2023. In 2023 the outreach team connected with over 1,150 veterans and separating service members at more than 75 in-person and virtual hiring events and military installation town halls across the U.S. Beyond talking with individuals about the railroad industry and job opportunities at Watco, these events covered resume writing, interview techniques, and timelines and schedules for transitioning from the military to civilian workforce.

“The skills and commitment of military veterans have prepared them to be outstanding railroaders, and our members have long recognized this fact,” said Chuck Baker, President of ASLRRRA. “Watco’s targeted Military Outreach and Hiring Program, has led to 103 veterans hired in 2023. Now, seven percent of Watco’s team members have served or are currently reservists in the U.S. armed forces. Watco’s efforts in connecting veterans to the rail industry, including internships, have been recognized by Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, the U.S. Transportation Command at Scott Air Force Base and the U.S. Army’s Partnership for Your Success.”

To build direct relationships with the military, Watco has increased its work with Transition Assistance Program (TAP) offices at different installations. The TAP is a standardized program across all the armed services, providing information, tools and training for individuals undergoing the military-to-civilian transition. In addition to working with TAP offices, Watco collaborates with state workforce agencies, job corps offices and other non-profit veteran employment organizations in its education and recruitment efforts.

As a sponsored employer with the Army Career Skills Program at Fort Moore in Georgia and a host company with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation’s Hiring Our Heroes Program, Watco also welcomes service members as interns, allowing them to learn firsthand about transportation careers and the railroad industry.

Watco focuses on highlighting veteran employees throughout the year, but in particular during National Military Veterans and Families Month in November and National Hire a Veteran Day in July, highlighting them in the company newsletter and on its social media profiles. In addition, Watco has created a special challenge coin, similar to those exchanged by service members, to honor its veteran employees.

Supporting their veteran workforce goes beyond the company doors, with Watco raising money to support veterans’ organizations. Recent recipients have included the USO, USA Cares, Honor Flight and more, with Watco donating over \$22,000 to date.

For more information on Watco’s commitment to military employees – click [here](#).

The Veterans Engagement Award recognizes an ASLRRA member employer that demonstrates positive policies toward U.S. veterans and who implements unique programs and practices to hire, recognize, support and engage with veterans in the workplace and the broader community.

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About ASLRRA - The American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRA) is a non-profit trade association representing the interests of the nation's 600 short line and regional railroads and railroad supply company members in legislative and regulatory matters. Short lines operate 47,500 miles of track in 49 states, or approximately 29% of the national railroad network, touching in origination or termination one out of every five cars moving on the national railroad system, serving customers who otherwise would be cut off from the national railroad network. www.aslrra.org