



SAFETY BULLETIN

2025-01

SUBJECT: Conductor Switching Fatality

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is investigating an on-track collision resulting in a fatality of a conductor that occurred on June 9, 2025, during a Union Pacific Railroad switching job in Nacogdoches, TX. Based on FRA's preliminary investigation, the locomotive engineer was shoving two locomotives and five covered hopper cars into a siding. The conductor was riding the consist and collided with cars that had been left fouling the siding after being set out on the main track. The employee had approximately two years of railroad experience, and qualified as a conductor in August 2023. While FRA's investigation into this accident is ongoing, the circumstances raise concerns about whether the conductor was properly trained and qualified to perform switching duties.

The purpose of this Safety Bulletin, which is informal in nature, is to ensure the railroad industry is aware of this recent accident resulting in the fatality of an employee and to encourage railroads to identify location-specific safety issues to cover during safety briefings and employee training. As FRA completes its investigation, it may take additional actions with respect to this accident.

FRA requests that railroads review this Safety Bulletin with managers and employees to increase awareness of the importance of providing supervisory oversight for employees on other than main track and to ensure employees thoroughly understand the hazards of equipment in the foul and the risks associated with shove movements. Specifically, FRA reminds railroads of the following:

1. Railroads must ensure that newly certified conductors or conductors in training have received structured and documented instruction in railroad operating fundamentals, consistent with the requirements of 49 CFR § 242.119. Railroad management should verify that conductors have demonstrated proficiency in both classroom and on-the-job training, with special emphasis on rules and procedures for identifying equipment fouling and safely conducting shove movements.
2. Railroads should review their operating rules testing programs under 49 CFR § 217.9 and ensure that railroad testing officers are compliant with 49 CFR § 217.9(b)(1) and are testing conductors for equipment left in the foul and proper shove procedures.
3. Railroads should review with employees Switching Operations Fatality Analysis (SOFA) Recommendation No. 5 – Mentor less experienced employees to perform services safely, and the SOFA Working Group Brief – Care During Shove Moves. The SOFA Working Group is a voluntary, non-regulatory, workplace-safety partnership formed to identify commonalities among fatalities and serious injuries that occur during switching operations. SOFA Alerts regarding switching related events are available at <https://railroads.dot.gov/railroad-safety/divisions/partnerships-programs/switching-operations-fatalities-analysis-sofa>.

FRA also reminds the industry of Safety Advisory 2007-01, which addresses the safety of shoving or pushing movements in yards, as well as Safety Bulletin 2023-04 (Trainee Switching Fatality Involving a Shove Movement in a Yard), Safety Bulletin 2023-05 (Shoving Movement Close Clearance Fatality) and Safety Bulletin 2024-04 (Conductor Switching Fatality).

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