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News

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U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean P. Duffy Announces Major Leap Forward in Railroad Bridge Safety Oversight

Department will train more than 160 Federal and State Track Inspectors to confirm structural safety of railroad bridges around the country.

In another move to improve transportation safety under the leadership of Secretary Duffy, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), part of the U.S. Department of Transportation, announced today that the number of safety inspectors who monitor railroad bridges will dramatically increase from less than 10 to more than 160.

Specifically, Federal track inspectors and their State counterparts in FRA's [State Safety Participation Program](#) will soon begin field inspections of railroad bridges that could result in recommendations for civil penalties when defects are found. A small FRA team already audits railroads' bridge management programs to ensure safe maintenance practices and identify potential weaknesses. They will soon be joined by more than 160 inspectors who will undergo training to assess railroads' compliance with Bridge Safety Standards as part of regular field inspections.

*"The Trump Administration is delivering on its promises to make government more efficient and keep travelers safe," said **Secretary Sean P. Duffy**. "Leveraging our existing, dedicated workforce to improve oversight of railroad bridge safety is another common-sense win for Americans."*

*"The Bridge Safety Standards have long helped assure that railroad bridges are safe," said **FRA Acting Administrator Drew Feeley**. "The addition of this training for existing inspectors will give FRA many more opportunities to confirm the structural soundness of railroad bridges. We will continue to find new and cost-effective ways to improve safety."*

*"The safety of the railroad system relies upon a multitude of components, but few are as critical to the public and the men and women we represent as the integrity of the bridges America's trains traverse," said **SMART Union National Safety & Legislative Director Jared Cassity**. "That's why SMART TD*

is encouraged to see the Trump Administration taking action to increase the number of inspectors qualified to inspect bridges by utilizing the existing State Track Inspectors and providing them with the necessary training to ensure rail carrier compliance on bridge safety. We would like to thank Secretary Duffy and Acting Administrator Feeley for their prompt attention to this matter, and we look forward to working with them to see that this project is successful and to prioritize the safest course for this nation's rail network in the future."

BACKGROUND:

FRA was recently approached by several state partners interested in helping to ensure compliance with the Bridge Safety Standards. Accordingly, FRA is using existing authority to enable its own inspectors and participating state agency inspectors to review railroad bridge safety under current regulations. FRA appreciates the important role state inspectors play to supplement federal inspectors and provide more resources to confirm the safety of the railroad network.

The new training will address bridge mechanics, with a focus on critical defects that could indicate a railroad's bridge inspection program is not sufficient to identify deficiencies. After training, inspectors may observe any railroad bridge for general condition and safety, and they may recommend civil penalty violations for certain critical defects if observed in the field.

Based on current staffing levels, 163 Federal and State Track Inspectors are expected to undergo new bridge safety training starting in November. Maintaining safety inspector levels is a priority for FRA. The training will include modules on bridge fundamentals; timber, steel, and concrete bridges; the components of a Bridge Management Program (BMP); and the processes, protocols, and coordination necessary for this initiative to succeed. The training will result in more observations of railroad bridges in the field and more audits of the railroads for compliance with the Bridge Safety Standards.

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