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Safety Alert: Emerging Trend - Rising Railroad Vehicle Accidents

A recent review of injury data reveals a significant increase in automobile accidents involving roadway maintenance and signal employees. These incidents represent a clear and growing safety concern, especially as we enter the 4th Quarter, a period already linked with higher overall roadway worker risks.

Key Safety Reminders for Vehicle Operation

- Seat belts save lives. Every driver and passenger must be buckled up, every trip, every time.
- Always adhere to established hours of service laws and regulations. Fatigue must not play a role in vehicle operation. Rested, alert drivers are essential for safe travel and to maintain situational awareness while driving
- Before moving, conduct a walk-around inspection of your vehicle. This simple step helps prevent backing accidents, ensures visibility of hazards, and confirms your vehicle is safe for operation.

Backing Procedures

- Railroad vehicles must follow safe backing practices at all times.
- Use of a Spotter: When a passenger is available, most railroads require that they exit the vehicle and serve as a ground guide for backing moves. This simple practice dramatically reduces the risk of collisions. While it may sometimes be overlooked in the field, it remains one of the most effective safeguards. Making the effort to use a spotter helps protect both people and property.
- Never back across a railroad crossing unless it is an emergency situation.

The Passenger's Role in Safety

- Passengers are more than riders. An aware passenger can serve as an extra set of eyes and ears, helping identify hazards the driver may not immediately see.
- Speak up if you notice unsafe speed, fatigue, distractions, or roadway hazards.
- Help monitor blind spots during lane changes or turns.
- Remind the driver of work zone conditions, railroad crossings, or approaching intersections.
- Be ready to act as a ground guide for backing moves, when required

Additional Safety Recommendations

- Obey posted speed limits and reduce speed for weather, traffic, or work zone conditions. Railroad vehicles must set the example for professional operation.
- Eliminate distractions. Mobile devices, paperwork, and food or drink should never take your attention away from driving.
- Ensure lights, mirrors, windshield wipers, and safety equipment are in working order before driving. Defects should be reported and repaired immediately.
- Anticipate seasonal hazards like shorter daylight hours, wet leaves, snow, and ice. Adjust your driving accordingly.

Final Word

The rise in railroad vehicle accidents is an alarming trend that demands immediate attention. By strictly following hours of service, using proven practices like walk-arounds and ground-guided backing procedures, encouraging active passenger awareness, and committing to distraction-free, defensive driving, we can reverse this trend and protect the lives of roadway workers.

**FAMES reminds all employees: Safety on the road is just as critical
as safety on the track.**