

SAFETY BULLETIN

2026-03

SUBJECT: Conductor Main Track Fatality

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is investigating a fatal incident involving a Norfolk Southern Railway (NS) conductor on July 9, 2026, at 3:44 a.m., in Whiting, Indiana. The conductor, with 23 years of service, was assigned to an eastbound train stopped on Main Track 2. He dismounted to perform a ground-level visual inspection of an opposing westbound train crossing from Main Track 1 to Main Track 3. While fouling Main Track 3, the conductor was struck by the westbound train, which was traveling at approximately 29 mph. At the time of the collision, the striking train's headlight was dimmed for the meet, and its bell and horn were actively sounding.

While FRA's investigation of this incident is ongoing, FRA is issuing this bulletin to remind railroads, employees, and contractors of the critical importance of maintaining situational awareness and complying with all Federal rail safety requirements and railroad operating rules. Railroads should review this Safety Bulletin with managers and employees, emphasizing operating rules, job briefings, and situational awareness. At a minimum, the review should include:

1. **Expecting Equipment Movements:** Emphasizing that employees must remain alert to train movements and expect equipment to move on any track, in either direction, at any time.
2. **Assessing Inspection Safety:** Evaluating whether ground-level "roll-by" inspections are necessary, or if such inspections can be safely performed from inside the locomotive cab or another location safely clear of adjacent tracks. Ensure that all employees who work on or around main tracks are aware of the risks associated with those environments and maintain constant situational awareness.
3. **Enforcing Safe Observation Locations:** Review railroad operating rules governing on-ground visual inspections of passing trains. Reinforce requirements for selecting safe observation locations, maintaining an adequate distance from moving equipment, and recognizing and avoiding hazardous locations that may expose employees to unnecessary risk.
4. **Reviewing Past Lessons Learned:** Review FRA Safety Bulletins 2023-07, 2024-07, and 2025-04, which describe similar fatal employee accidents and highlight critical safety lessons.

Railroads should also review FRA Safety Advisory 2010-03, "Staying Alert and Situational Awareness," with their managements and employees, available at:
<https://railroads.dot.gov/elibrary/staying-alert-and-situational-awareness>

Issued: July 20, 2026

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