



SAFETY BULLETIN

2026-04

SUBJECT: Switching Injury Involving Going Between Equipment

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is investigating a serious injury involving a Norfolk Southern Railway (NS) conductor that occurred on July 12, 2026, at approximately 9:20 p.m., in Louisville, Kentucky. Preliminary information indicates that during a switching movement, a cut of railcars was shoved into a line of standing cars. Upon impact, the shoved cars coupled to the first two standing cars, while the remaining cars separated into two cuts. When the conductor stepped between the coupled cars and the first cut to adjust a knuckle, the second cut rolled back into the first, pinning the conductor between the couplers of the two cuts of cars.

While FRA's investigation of this accident is ongoing, FRA is issuing this Safety Bulletin to reinforce critical safety practices among railroads, employees, and contractors, to prevent similar incidents. Railroads should review this Bulletin with managers and employees, emphasizing operating rules, job briefings, and situational awareness. At a minimum, reviews should include:

1. **Operating Rules Addressing Going Between Rail Equipment:** Ensure operating rules governing going between rail equipment are reviewed and, as necessary, revised, to establish and maintain adequate minimum equipment separation, and to confirm that equipment is protected and secured against unintended movement before employees go between, including during switching, humping, and trim operations in bowl and classification tracks. Remind employees of the importance of complying with these rules.
2. **Operational Testing:** Review existing operational testing programs required under 49 CFR § 217.9 and ensure that regular monitoring is conducted to verify employee compliance with operating rules governing going between rail equipment, minimum separation distances, and protection of equipment against unintended movement. Focus review on the testing program's applicability to individuals with prior rule violations related to going between equipment and ensuring sufficient safety intervention protocols are established (*e.g.*, retraining, peer mentorship, periodic observations), to emphasize the importance of complying with operating rules to ensure employees' safety.
3. **Prior FRA Safety Bulletins:** FRA Safety Bulletins 2023-01, 2024-05, and 2024-06 describe similar employee accidents and the associated safety lessons learned.
4. **FRA Safety Advisory 2013-03:** Review the recommendations made in FRA Safety Advisory 2013-03, "[Kicking Cars and Going Between Rolling Equipment During Flat Switching Operations.](#)"

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