

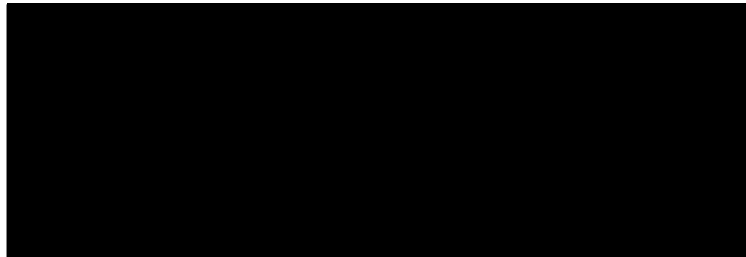


U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Railroad
Administration**

SEP 13 2018

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590



The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is continuously striving to improve the safety of railroad operations, which depend upon alert and fully functional professionals who are not adversely affected by drug use—even when that use is medically authorized.

This letter is part of FRA's continuing efforts to ensure railroad employees use prescription (Rx) and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs in a manner consistent with the safe performance of their duties. Railroads and their employees who perform safety-sensitive functions must be aware of and understand the potential adverse effects of prescription or OTC drugs that could impair work performance and have a potentially negative impact on rail safety. Please distribute this letter to your member railroads and encourage them to share it with their employees and contractors as appropriate.

FRA regulations prohibit illicit drug use and the unauthorized use of certain controlled substances by regulated service employees (defined as covered service and maintenance-of-way employees). See 49 CFR Part 219, Control of Alcohol and Drug Use. FRA is equally concerned, however, about the potential side effects of some prescription and OTC drugs, particularly those with sedating and impairing effects that may adversely affect an individual's ability to perform safety-sensitive functions.

FRA regulations require that a regulated service employee's physician, with knowledge of the employee's duties and medical history (including the employee's complete prescription and OTC drug use), determine if the use of a substance is consistent with the safe performance of the employee's duties. See 49 CFR § 219.103. However, many potentially impairing drugs, such as sedating antihistamines, do not require a prescription. Therefore, regulated service employees must also be aware of the adverse effects of commonly used OTC drugs, both singly and in combination with other OTC or prescribed drugs.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) maintains the FDA Online Label Repository, which contains the drug listing and label information for prescription and OTC drugs that companies have submitted to the FDA. See 49 CFR Part 207, Railroad Police Officers.

Information contained in the FDA Online Label Repository includes descriptions of the medications, warnings, and information about potential adverse effects and impaired performance that the medicines may cause. FRA has posted a link to the FDA Online Label Repository on its website: <https://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P0345>. It can also be found at <https://labels.fda.gov>.

FRA encourages railroads to be aware of, and railroad employees to thoroughly discuss with their physicians (or other treating medical professionals), potential side effects or adverse reactions to medications prescribed or recommended by any medical professional as they may relate to the employee's job performance.

Additionally, FRA encourages railroads to educate their employees on the potential dangers of using prescription and OTC medications while performing safety-sensitive functions, particularly regulated service. FRA will soon be releasing an Rx-OTC Training Module for use by the railroad industry.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Mr. Jerry Powers, Drug and Alcohol Program Manager, at 202-493-6313 or gerald.powers@dot.gov.

A similar letter has been sent to other railroad and labor associations.

Sincerely,



Karl Alexy
Deputy Associate Administrator