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USDOT's Federal Railroad Administration Announces New Safety Initiative with a Focus on Hazardous Materials



FRA Administrator Amit Bose speaks about national rail safety initiatives at a FEMA-led press briefing

EAST PALESTINE, OH – Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Administrator Amit Bose today announced a [national initiative](#) for focused inspections on routes that carry high-hazard flammable trains (HHFTs) and other trains carrying large volumes of hazmat commodities. Working with USDOT's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), FRA will identify these routes and

prioritize them for inspection beginning immediately. The inspections will start in East Palestine, Ohio, and expand to communities nationwide.

FRA inspectors, using a combination of human visual inspections and [Automated Track Inspection](#) technology, will assess the overall condition of rail infrastructure as well as railroads' compliance with FRA regulatory requirements governing track. Information will be shared with railroads as well as rail labor organizations, and it will be periodically published for the public to increase transparency.

“Safety is always our number one priority, and the Norfolk Southern derailment reminds us of the importance of ensuring no industry can put its profits over the safety of its workers and the communities it serves,” said **Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg**. “As our investigators continue their work to support NTSB’s investigation, we are also taking additional steps right now to prevent future disasters and we insist that the rail industry do the same.”

FRA’s Automated Track Inspection Program (ATIP) inspection vehicles, which are paired with human inspections, surveyed approximately 180,000 miles of track last year and help remediate around 10,000 track safety defects annually.

“FRA is vigorously responding to the concerns expressed by residents of East Palestine and the surrounding areas, and as a result of the recent derailment, we are ramping up our safety efforts across the country,” said **FRA Administrator Amit Bose**. “FRA will begin ATIP and visual inspections of Norfolk Southern Railway track in the vicinity of East Palestine. Many more inspections will follow, and the data that they yield will allow us, as well as railroads, labor, and State and local governments, to implement better-informed decisions and policies regarding rail safety.”

This kick-off makes good on one of the key USDOT actions in Secretary Buttigieg’s drive to ensure freight rail accountability and improve safety following the Norfolk Southern derailment. In addition to the initiative launched today in East Palestine, USDOT continues to pursue several other safety-related actions, such as:

- Advancing a rule requiring two-person train crews;
- Targeting legacy tank cars – especially those carrying hazmat – for inspections and safety reviews;
- Deploying resources made available by President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to upgrade and modernize rail infrastructure and to make safety improvements over the long-term; and
- Evaluating new rules that would require electronically controlled pneumatic (ECP) brakes on HHFTs and other trains transporting large quantities of hazardous materials.

Also, this week Secretary Buttigieg called on all Class I railroads to take part in FRA’s Confidential Close Call Reporting System, and FRA issued a [Safety Advisory](#) to all railroads on hot bearing wayside detectors.

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