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USDOT and FRA Continue Pressing on Rail Safety, Finalizes Norfolk Southern Railway Participation into Confidential Close Call Reporting System

Entry into the program will allow approximately 1,000 workers to confidentially report close calls and improve rail safety

Additional Class I freight railroad participation stands to benefit more than 100,000 railroad employees

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) today announced that Norfolk Southern Railway (NS) will officially join a pilot program of the Confidential Close Call Reporting System (C³RS) in partnership with the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) and the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers – Transportation Division (SMART-TD). As a result of the agreement, NS employees represented by BLET and SMART-TD in Atlanta, Georgia; Elkhart, Indiana; and Roanoke, Virginia, will be able to confidentially report unsafe events that they experience while being protected from NS discipline. The program has been proven to improve rail safety.

USDOT Secretary Pete Buttigieg called on all Class I freight railroads to join this vital reporting program nearly a year ago – after the NS derailment in East Palestine, Ohio. Every Class I railroad agreed to join – yet NS is the only one that has joined. Today's agreement comes after months of FRA-led meetings and collaboration with worker representatives and NS to secure the first group of Class I freight railroad employees to currently participate in C³RS. USDOT and FRA continue to expect the remaining Class I freight railroads, all of which committed to joining C³RS in March 2023, to make good on their commitment.

“FRA and the U.S. Department of Transportation have been using the full range of our authority to improve rail safety and push the industry to protect their employees, keep the public safe, and keep communities informed,” said **Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg**. “Norfolk Southern has taken a good first step, and it’s time for the other Class I railroads to back up their talk with action and make good on their promises to join this close call reporting system and keep America’s rail network safe.

Enabling workers to report their experiences without fear of retribution is an essential part of building a robust safety culture in the rail industry. C³RS is designed to enable employees to share their full experiences, better informing the railroad, other workers, and the entire industry about close calls that employees experience. This collaborative program informs corrective actions that mitigate hazards, and shares data and analyses conducted by NASA under C³RS with the entire railroad industry, which ultimately improves rail safety. Lessons learned and best practices are also shared during briefings and at FRA-hosted workshops, leveraging the experiences employees report to enhance the safety of the rail industry as a whole.

“C³RS is a commonsense program that empowers frontline railroad employees to play a critical role in ensuring their safety and that of their colleagues and the general public,” said **FRA Administrator Amit Bose**. “We are greatly encouraged by Norfolk Southern Railway’s decision to enter the program with some of their employees represented by BLET and SMART-TD. However, it’s been nearly a year and no other Class I freight railroads have made good on their promise to join the program – it’s time for action. All Class Is and their various craft employees stand to benefit from this program. The occurrence of any preventable accident, injury, or death is unacceptable, and FRA will continue to fight for the right of rail workers to help improve rail safety without fear of discipline or enforcement.”

In addition to Secretary Buttigieg's [letter](#) to Class I railroads in February 2023, FRA has encouraged the Class I freights to join C³RS for years, having achieved significant growth in the program from about 15 participating shortline and passenger railroads covering 23,000 employees in 2019 to 27 such railroads and more than 32,000 workers covered today. C³RS provides a system for proactive safety actions that allows railroad employees, managers, and companies to prevent and reduce the risk of accidents that could lead to unnecessary casualties. To date, NASA has received nearly 31,000 reports through C³RS.

In addition to C³RS, DOT has taken a number of actions over the last year to improve rail safety, and better support workers and first responders, including:

- Conducted more than 7,500 rail safety inspections on hazardous material routes
- Funded projects to eliminate or improve more than 400 at-grade crossings
- Helped press to get paid sick leave for more than 87% of Class I freight rail workers
- Funded 70 rail safety projects through the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements program
- Proposed rule to require railroads to maintain and update in real-time information on rail hazmat shipments
- Issued a Final Rule requiring railroads to provide emergency escape breathing apparatus to train crews

For more information on C³RS, including a full list of participating railroads, please see FRA’s webpage on the program [here](#).

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