



SAFETY BULLETIN

2024-05

SUBJECT: Conductor Struck by Railcar while Gravity Switching in a Yard

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is investigating a serious injury that occurred in the early afternoon of July 19, 2024. A 50-year-old utility conductor, with 6 years of service, was struck by a railcar during coal dumping operations. The utility conductor was working between and around railcars during a gravity switching operation—pulling pins and setting and releasing handbrakes using a brake stick—when he was struck by the second of two rolling, uncoupled cars. FRA is actively investigating this accident and is issuing this bulletin to remind railroads, railroad employees, and railroad contractors of the importance of ensuring that safety briefings and training sessions cover and identify location-specific safety issues and relevant operating rules, including ensuring:

1. Training programs adequately prepare employees to fully understand the operating rules and communication requirements for fouling tracks and equipment, and the hazards associated with the dynamic environment of car switching.
2. Employees possess working knowledge of the rules for fouling tracks and equipment, have received proper instructions, and are continuously monitored for compliance and safety.
3. Employees frequently review and thoroughly understand the operating rules governing the use of car hand brakes and brake sticks.
4. Railroads review with their employees “The Five Life Savers” by the Switching Operations Fatality Analysis (SOFA) Working Group, which is a voluntary, non-regulatory, workplace-safety partnership formed to identify commonalities among fatalities that occur during switching operations. SOFA information is available on FRA’s website at <https://railroads.dot.gov/railroad-safety/divisions/partnerships-programs/switching-operations-fatalities-analysis-sofa>.

FRA also reminds railroads of the recommendations made in “Following Procedures When Going Between Rolling Equipment,” FRA Safety Advisory 2011-02, which is available on FRA’s website at https://railroads.dot.gov/sites/fra.dot.gov/files/fra_net/958/SA201102.pdf.

The purpose of this Safety Bulletin, which is informational in nature, is to ensure the railroad industry, including railroad employees and contractors, are aware of this recent accident that severely injured an employee. As FRA completes its investigation into this incident, FRA may take additional action with respect to this accident.

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