



SAFETY BULLETIN

2024-06

SUBJECT: Switching Injury Involving Going In-between Equipment

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is investigating a serious injury that occurred during switching operations on the night of August 27, 2024. A 22-year-old conductor, with approximately two months of qualified service, was pinned between two railcars during switching operations. The injury occurred at a yard designed with a 0.25% grade where the emptied cars are classified, with limited lighting and close track centers. Prior to the incident, the conductor directed his locomotive engineer to shove a cut of cars toward another cut of cars on the track for coupling. However, the cars failed to couple. At the time, the conductor had established three-step protection with his engineer and was attempting to adjust the knuckle on another cut of cars, which was missing its pin. The cut of cars that failed to couple rolled back, pinning him in-between the two cars.

FRA is actively investigating this accident and is issuing this bulletin to remind railroads and railroad employees 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 are adequate to prepare employees' understanding of the operating rules for fouling tracks and equipment. Employees should be made aware of the risks associated with car switching. Training should also ensure that employees and trainees possess a comprehensive understanding of these rules, receive the appropriate instruction, and are consistently monitored for safety compliance, especially new employees.
2. Railroads review and update, if necessary, operating rules governing how to safely go in-between equipment, with heightened focus on equipment separation and unsecured equipment.

FRA also reminds railroads of the recommendations made in FRA Safety Advisory 2013-03, titled "Kicking Cars and Going Between Rolling Equipment During Flat Switching Operations."¹ In that same Safety Advisory, FRA also recommended that railroads review with their employees, including management employees, Switching Operations Fatality Analysis (SOFA) Recommendation #1, Adjusting Knuckles, Adjusting Drawbars, and installing End of Train Devices, and communicate its procedures implementing that recommendation to employees working in yards or other locations where the possibility of entering between rolling equipment exists.²

The purpose of this Safety Bulletin is to ensure that the railroad industry is aware of this recent accident that severely injured an employee. As FRA completes its investigation into this incident, FRA may take additional actions as necessary for safety.

¹ FRA Safety Advisory 2013-03 is available on FRA's website at https://railroads.dot.gov/sites/fra.dot.gov/files/fra_net/3167/Safety%20Advisory%202013-03.pdf.

² The SOFA Working Group is a voluntary, non-regulatory, workplace-safety partnership formed to identify commonalities among fatalities that occur during switching operations. SOFA analyses of previous events are available on FRA's website at <https://railroads.dot.gov/railroad-safety/divisions/partnerships-programs/switching-operations-fatalities-analysis-sofa>.

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