

SAFETY BULLETIN

2025-04

SUBJECT: Conductor Main Track Fatality

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is investigating a BNSF Railway (BNSF) fatality that occurred on October 19, 2025, at 10:30 a.m. in Columbus, Montana. A conductor was on the ground releasing handbrakes on his train. While walking eastbound within the foul of the adjacent main track and facing east, he was struck from behind by an approaching train. The eastbound freight train, traveling at approximately 37 mph, observed the conductor ahead and began sounding the horn while transmitting over the radio to warn him. The conductor did not have his handheld radio with him and did not respond to the approaching train. The conductor had over 12 years of service. This informal Safety Bulletin is intended to inform the railroad industry of this recent accident, which resulted in the fatality of an employee.

Railroads should review this Safety Bulletin with their managers and employees to remind them of the critical importance of ensuring that safety briefings and training sessions cover the pertinent operating rules. Topics incorporated into the review could include:

1. Ensuring that all employees are adequately trained and fully understand the applicable personal safety rules and communication requirements.
2. Ensuring that all employees who work on or around main tracks are aware of the risks associated with those environments and maintain constant situational awareness.
3. Ensuring that railroad testing officers comply with the requirements of 49 CFR § 217.9(b)(1) and test for compliance with operating rules and personal safety requirements when working on or around main tracks.
4. Ensuring that managers and employees review FRA Safety Bulletin 2024-07, which describes a similar accident involving a conductor fatality.

Railroads should also review with their managers and employees FRA Safety Advisory 2010-03, “Staying Alert and Situational Awareness,” at: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2010-10-18/pdf/2010-26089.pdf>

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