



Railway Accountability Act

Section 2 – Broken Rim Derailments

Broken rims are the leading cause of wheel-related train accidents, and are increasing as a percentage of all equipment-related accidents. More information is needed on vertical split rim failures, which only occur in North America and are on the rise. This provision would direct the FRA to study broken rim derailments and wheel impact load thresholds, and identify new mitigation strategies.

This would prevent derailments like the 2015 North Dakota derailment, where 6 loaded oil tank cars derailed, 5 caught fire, 30 residents were evacuated, and \$2 million in damages was incurred. The March 2023 derailment in Kansas, which spilled denatured oil in a refinery, is also believed to have been caused by a broken wheel.

Section 3 – Train Consist

This section builds on the FRA's existing Risk Reduction Program (RRP) established under President Trump, incorporating considerations regarding management of in-train forces. Better control of the train consist can reduce derailments and improves hazmat transportation.

Section 4 – Brake Inspections

This section would prohibit mechanics from inspecting a locomotive or rail car while the train is in motion, ensuring adequate inspection and protecting train crew safety. It also ensures that the mechanic that actually inspects a locomotive or rail car attests to its safety.

Section 5 – Safety Waivers

Currently, the FRA does not make it easy for the public to access information about the safety waivers it grants. This provision would make this public information available in one location.

Section 6 – Proper Functioning of Emergency Brake Signals

This section addresses an open NTSB recommendation by ensuring that communication checks between the front and end of a train do not fail and that emergency brake signals reach the end of a train. This would prevent tragedies like the 2018 collision in Wyoming, where a freight rail train collided with the rear of a stationary train, killing 2, derailing 68 cars and locomotives, and causing \$3.2 million of damage.

Section 7 – Close Call System

The Federal Railroad Administration helps administer a confidential reporting system where close calls and unsafe events can be evaluated and best practices can be shared among participating railroads to avoid the potential for more serious consequences. Norfolk Southern recently joined this system, C3RS, after having participated in the C3RS Working Group. While the remaining Class I railroads have indicated their intent to join C3RS, this provision would ensure participation by major railroads that have been fined the maximum civil penalty for safety violations.

Section 8 – Rail Employee Safety

Building on another open NTSB recommendation, the bill would also ensure that railroads provide warning equipment (such as white disks, red flags, or whistles) to railroad watchmen and lookouts, as most railroads already do. It would ensure that these employees aren't relying on yelling, preventing incidents like the 2017 South Dakota tragedy, when 2 workers were struck and killed because of the absence of on-safety warning equipment.