



SAFETY ADVISORY

August 23, 2023

This safety alert is being issued in association with FRA Safety Bulletins 2023-04 and 2023-05, both regarding the two recent fatal accidents that have occurred on CSX property within the last 60 days, and in response to the subsequent reports of events involving trainees that have been received from the field.

As you are all well aware, on-the-job instructors (conductors) are often times not purposefully chosen. They are neither vetted nor selected with any specificity by the carrier but rather selected simply by the randomness of the crew calling procedure(s). In most cases, this can result in less than ideal situations, which includes the unacceptable practice of placing conductor trainees with newly promoted conductors (with less than one year's experience). This is not only a failure to the trainees, but a failure to the men and women being tasked with additional responsibility despite not being equipped by the carrier for a successful training opportunity.

Additionally, and equally concerning is the lack of consistency during the on-the-job-training (OJT) process. Practically every assignment for a conductor trainee is like a fresh start due to the non-existence of assigned OJT trainers. Because there is no meaningful communication between conductors that have been assigned a trainee, there is no record or consideration of tasks experienced by the trainee while training in the field. This equates to no record of repetition or experience when it comes to the in-the-field experiences the trainee has been exposed to. The result is the unfortunate inability to reinforce areas of needed focus and/or introduction to practices that may not otherwise be available on other job assignments.

Training in the railroad industry is being rushed. As trainees, you are not being properly exposed (while in a controlled environment) to the hazards you will encounter once in the field. And to the contrary, conductors have no knowledge of your experience nor the progression of your training timeline. As such, we all need to work together to overcome the shortfalls of the carrier's training programs.

Your Union is and has been concerned for the deterioration of training in the railroad industry (amongst Class I carriers) since the implementation of Precision Scheduled Railroading. And while some railroads are making positive changes, the fact is more needs to be done. We will continue to work diligently to see that appropriate action is taken and adequate change is made to demand and require a training program that is robust and sufficient enough to ensure the safest course. Until then, safety is on us.

It is for these reasons that we make the following points and recommendations. Please distribute and post where appropriate.



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CONDUCTORS

- **You are empowered to stop any and all movement** at any time you feel you or a member of your crew's safety may be in jeopardy.
 - Be mindful that your trainee may have never experienced the task that you are about to perform.
 - This includes riding equipment (NOTE: Trainees, most likely, will not be exposed to all types of equipment while at their initial training facility. This results in unfamiliarity with riding positions and proper riding locations.)
- **Be alert for warning signs when it comes to trainees riding equipment.**
 - Observe how they mount the equipment and ascertain that their riding style is appropriate, per the rules, and best suited for their physique.
 - Watch for signs of fatigue or discomfort while riding (e.g., shifting positions, relocation of their being on the equipment, extension of arms transitioned to hooked elbows, etc.).
 - If this is observed, stop the movement, and have a job briefing. If fatigue is present, allow them to rest or consider walking.
- If you are riding equipment and encounter other equipment on adjacent tracks, **stop the move and ascertain that there is proper clearance for both you and the trainee.**
 - Just because you have ridden in a particular area of a yard and know there to be enough clearance for you to safely ride does not mean that the trainee will also possess the same amount of clearance. **Stop and verify.**
- **Talk with your trainees and ask if they have areas where they feel they need improvement.**
 - Think outside of the box and ask if they have been taught how to do things that may not necessarily be daily tasks on the route in which you're operating (i.e., servicing an industry, shoving at a specific location on excepted track that may have its own unique challenges, etc.).



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CONDUCTOR TRAINEES

- **Conductors may not have been properly educated or prepared to identify areas where you might be struggling.** Most likely, all they know to do is let you shadow their day-to-day activities.
 - They have not been educated or prepared to identify areas where you may be struggling.
- **Conductors may or may not be equipped to track your progression.** Like you, every assignment with a new trainee is like a fresh start in the training process for them as well.
 - **Communicate what you have and have not experienced.** Do not be embarrassed to say that you don't know how, or that you are apprehensive about a particular task or situation.
- **Riding equipment is not easy.**
 - If you become uncomfortable or fatigued, stop the movement. (Job brief about this with your conductor prior to initiating the movement so that communication between the two of you is understood.)
- **Be mindful of your surroundings.**
 - Do not ever assume there is adequate clearance when riding equipment.
 - Stop and job brief with your conductor to make certain that it is safe to ride. (Just because the railroad has not identified an area as being close clearance does not mean that there is enough clearance for you to safely ride. Stop and verify.)
- **You have the power to stop the movement.**
 - Do not allow yourself to be put into a position in which you are not comfortable.
 - Know your controlling locomotive's number and be willing to tell them to stop.