



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

**Federal Railroad  
Administration**

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

April 26, 2024

Elizabeth F. Whited  
President  
Union Pacific Railroad  
1400 Douglas St.  
Omaha, NE 68179  
Via email: EFWHITED@up.com

**RE: Safety Culture Assessment Data Collection Suspension**

Dear Ms. Whited:

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has been made aware of several activities that may adversely impact the integrity of the Safety Culture Assessment on Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR). As a result of this, FRA is suspending its safety culture data collection activities as of April 26, 2024.

FRA has discovered that numerous employees were coached to provide specific responses to FRA questions if they were approached for a safety culture interview. Reports of this coaching span the UPRR system and railroad crafts. FRA has also encountered reluctance to participate in field interviews from employees who cite intimidation or fear of retaliation. Additionally, other employees have informed FRA inspectors that they have received instruction that if they are approached to complete a field interview, they must report this interaction to their supervisor. This puts at risk FRA's commitment to keep responses related to the Safety Culture Assessment confidential. Data integrity and confidentiality are fundamental and essential to FRA's assessment activities. Continuing to collect data when the objectivity of the information collected is in question is not fair to the employees at UPRR, the FRA staff who devote time and effort to these inspections, and to the public. As such, with widespread evidence that these fundamental elements have been jeopardized, FRA has no choice but to end data collection activities.

FRA will continue to exercise its statutory authority to conduct inspections, accident investigations, and other railroad safety oversight activities. As you are aware, FRA personnel may enter railroad property unannounced to inspect railroad facilities, equipment, rolling stock, operations, and relevant records to enforce the Federal railroad safety laws, 49 U.S.C. §§ 20101 et seq., and their respective implementing regulations.

FRA is committed to assisting railroads in fostering a robust safety culture. Because I believe the best path to improvement requires clear information about actual conditions, FRA will likely re-initiate a UPRR Safety Culture Assessment again either later this year or early next year. In the interim, FRA will work with UP to identify policies and practices that, if improved, would maximize the usefulness of safety culture data collection.

Sincerely,



Karl Alexy  
Associate Administrator, Office of Railroad Safety  
Chief Safety Officer

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