



SAFETY BULLETIN

2023-05

SUBJECT: Shoving Movement Close Clearance Fatality

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is investigating a fatality that occurred on August 6, 2023. Based on FRA's preliminary investigation, the conductor was riding the end of the leading intermodal car controlling the yard shoving move and a conductor trainee (CT) was riding the leading end of the second car. The move consisted of two locomotives and nine loaded intermodal well cars. Both employees were riding on the same side of the cars. The accident occurred at night. The leading end of the movement traversed a slight curve and approached a set of three parked locomotives on the adjacent track to their right. The conductor continued the shove movement even though the track centers were becoming increasingly narrow. The conductor's stature allowed him to position himself to pass the locomotives. However, the CT was not able to pass the locomotives and received fatal crushing injuries between the car he was riding and the parked locomotives. It is important to note that the conductor had less than a year of experience and never made this switch prior to the accident. The CT was released from classroom training approximately two weeks prior to this incident.

The purpose of this Safety Bulletin, which is informal in nature, is to ensure the railroad industry is aware of this recent accident that resulted in a fatality of an employee and encourage railroads to identify locations where clearance specific safety issues could occur, cover these serious safety issues during safety-briefings, and (re)train employees as needed. As FRA completes its investigation, it may take additional actions with respect to this accident.

FRA requests that railroads review this Safety Bulletin with employees to increase awareness of the dangers of close clearances when riding moving equipment and ensure employees who ride moving equipment do so safely, to include:

1. Railroads should review their training programs to ensure the programs are adequate to prepare employees to identify close clearance and equipment fouling situations while riding equipment. Training programs should ensure that employees overseeing trainees possess sufficient experience and understanding of their duties to adequately impart a safety-first mindset and proper instruction to trainees they oversee.
2. Railroads should identify yard and main line close clearance tracks where employees should not ride equipment and post those findings in the railroads operating rules, special instructions, and timetables. Additionally, railroads should consider marking all permanent close/no clearances with highly visible signs.
3. Employees should only ride equipment when necessary for job duties, and only after the process for doing so is discussed in a job briefing. Further, employees should only ride equipment after determining it is safe to do so.



4. Railroads should review with their employees Switching Operations Fatality Analysis (SOFA) Safety Alert - August 2023. That alert is available on FRA's website at <https://railroads.dot.gov/elibrary/sofa-alert-august-11-2023>. The SOFA Working Group is a voluntary, non-regulatory, workplace safety partnership formed to identify commonalities among fatalities that occur during switching operations.

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