

# Railroads: Moving America Safely

ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN RAILROADS

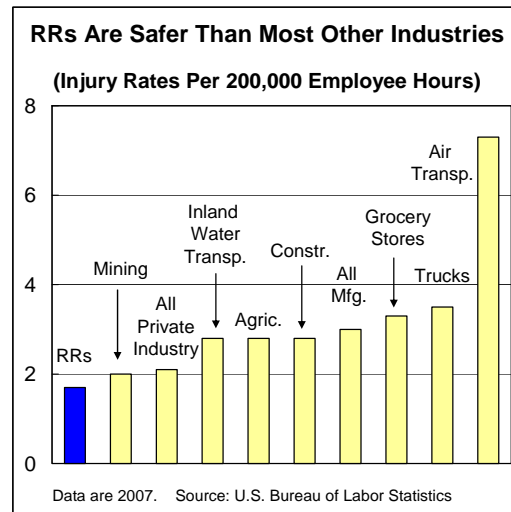
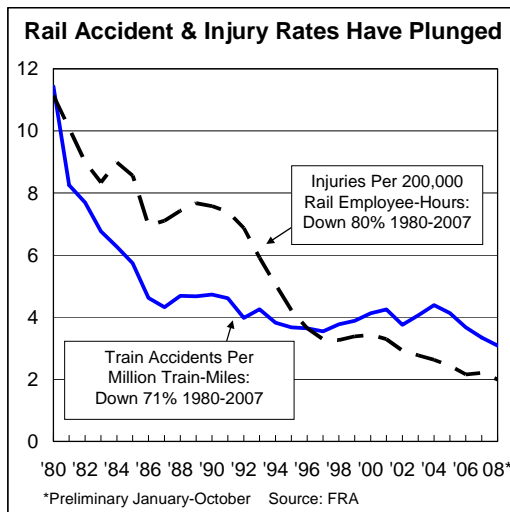
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## Summary

**Nothing** is more important to railroads than safety. Today, America's railroads are **safer than ever before**, but railroads are not satisfied — they want to be safer still. That's why they are constantly researching, developing, and implementing new safety-enhancing technologies, and working cooperatively with their employees, suppliers, customers, and governments to find new ways to improve their already stellar safety record.

## America's Railroads: Safer than Ever

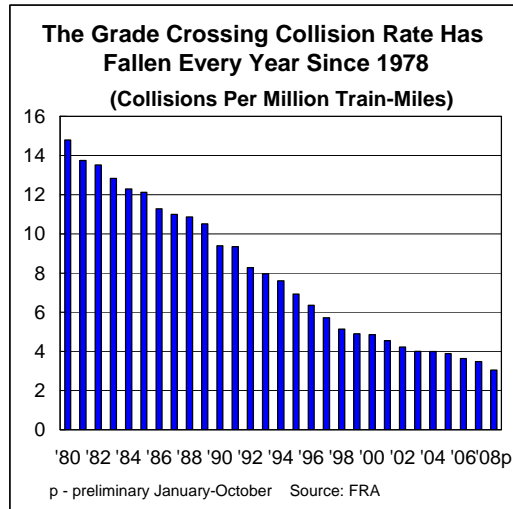
- 2007 was the safest year ever for America's railroads, and preliminary data indicate that **2008 was even safer**. From 1980 to 2007, the train accident rate fell 71 percent, the rail employee injury rate fell 80 percent, and the grade crossing collision rate fell 76 percent.
- Many years ago, railroads were considered a relatively unsafe place to work, but that's not true any more. Today, railroads have lower employee injury rates than most other major industries, including trucks, barges, airlines, agriculture, mining, manufacturing, and construction — **even lower than grocery stores!**



## Raising the Grade on Grade Crossing Safety

- Railroads have made great strides in reducing collisions at highway-rail grade crossings. From 1980 to 2007, the number of grade crossing collisions fell 74 percent, grade crossing injuries fell 73 percent, and grade crossing fatalities fell 60 percent — even though highway and train traffic are both much higher today than they were in 1980.

- This impressive achievement is due in large part to intensive efforts by railroads and others (especially Operation Lifesaver, a nationwide non-profit group) to educate the public about the dangers of irresponsible behavior around grade crossings. The closure or grade separation of thousands of crossings and the federal “Section 130” program — which distributes \$220 million per year to state governments for grade crossing improvements — have also been critical.
- Railroads spend more than \$250 million each year keeping grade crossings in good repair, plus millions more on educational programs. They cooperate closely the state agencies responsible for deciding where to install and upgrade grade crossing warning devices, and help fund Operation Lifesaver.



### Hazmat: A Risky Requirement, A Loaded Liability

- Like their overall safety record, freight railroads’ record in moving hazardous materials (hazmat) safely is excellent. **More than 99.99 percent** of rail hazmat shipments reach their destination without a train-caused release. That’s a safety record any industry would envy, and it’s evidence of a lasting commitment to safety — rail hazmat accident rates are **down 88 percent** since 1980.
- Unlike trucks, barges, and airlines, railroads cannot say “thanks, but no thanks” when it comes to transporting highly-hazardous materials. That’s because the federal government actually **requires** railroads (but no one else) to transport these materials, even when railroads don’t want to. This requirement to carry highly-hazardous materials comes with a serious risk: every time a railroad does so, it faces potentially ruinous liability.
- Policymakers should address the **unfair risk** that railroads are forced to assume when they carry this traffic. One way to do this is to strongly encourage chemical producers and users to **substitute less hazardous products and technologies** for highly-hazardous materials whenever possible. After all, if highly-hazardous materials are not used and not transported, **no one** (including the general public) **is at risk**.

### New Technologies Enhance Rail Safety

- When it comes to safety, railroads are never content to leave well enough alone — in fact, they’re constantly incorporating new technologies to improve rail safety. Just a few examples: sophisticated trackside detectors that identify defects on passing rail cars before structural failure occurs; ground-penetrating radar that identifies problems below ground, such as excessive water penetration that could cause instability; and specialized rail cars that use sophisticated instruments to identify defects in tracks.
- Railroads are developing **positive train control** (PTC) systems that will automatically stop or slow a train if danger is ahead. These systems, which are expected to reduce the number of train accidents caused by human error, will be installed on much of America’s rail network by December 2015.