Freight Rail Safety Record

Railroads’ annual investments to modernize and improve America’s freight rail network have significantly contributed to freight rail’s strong safety record.

In fact, there is a direct correlation between the increase in rail network investments and enhanced safety performance.

With record levels of private spending on capital improvements and maintenance over the last five years and more than $25 billion annually on average, America’s privately owned freight railroads are at the forefront of advancing safety.

2018 rail safety data continues to show that recent years have been the safest on record for the rail sector. According to FRA data, since 2009 the:

- Train accident rate is down 10%
- Equipment-caused accident rate is down 11%
- Track-caused accident rate is down 26%
- Derailment rate is down 9%
- Employee injury rate is down 16%

From 2008 to 2017, the hazmat accident rate fell 48% while the grade crossing collision rate fell 37% between 2000 and 2018.

- **One of America’s Safest Industries:** America’s railroads have lower employee injury rates than most other major industries, including trucking, airlines, agriculture, mining, manufacturing and construction — even lower than food stores.

- **Tech Investments:** To identify problems before they occur, railroads are investing in new technologies — from track-side detectors to ultrasound, big data and drones.

- **World-Class Testing Facility:** Many railroad safety advancements are developed at the Transportation Technology Center, Inc. (TTCI) in Pueblo, Colorado, a subsidiary of the AAR that’s widely considered the best rail research facility in the world.

- **Strong Hazmat Safety:** In 2018, more than 99.999% of rail hazmat shipments reached their destination without a release caused by an incident.

- **Government Oversight:** The FRA oversees virtually every aspect of rail operations. Railroads also partner with the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration and the Department of Homeland Security to help ensure a safe network.