Freight Rail Safety

KEY TAKEAWAY

Safeguarding the well-being of their employees and the communities along their train routes is a top priority for freight rail companies. Thanks in part to ongoing private investments into technology, infrastructure and equipment, freight rail is the safest way to move goods over land and is working to get safer every day.

Railroads work daily with their employees, suppliers and customers, and federal, state and local officials to safeguard the rail network and the people who operate it and interact with it. Railroads' holistic approach to rail safety focuses on:

- Maintaining and modernizing infrastructure and equipment.
- Rigorously training employees and improving operations.
- Developing and deploying technology.
- Safeguarding communities and supporting first responders.
- Monitoring and protecting physical and digital networks.

Freight rail's billions of dollars in annual private investments underscore this holistic approach. In fact, there is a direct correlation between rail's private investments and increased safety. Since The Staggers Act of 1980, which allowed railroads to start pouring billions into their networks each year, the safety record has drastically improved. The train accident rate is down 28% since 2000, and the last decade was the safest ever, with the 2022 hazmat accident rate among the lowest ever.

The rail industry has lower employee injury rates than most other sectors.

Railroads prioritize safety culture through knowledge-sharing and cutting-edge training centers with simulators and virtual reality. Daily employee meetings emphasize teamwork and ongoing on-the-job learning. Innovations like drone-based bridge inspections enhance job performance and ensure employee safety.

Technology extends human inspection capabilities.

Railroads use technology every moment of the day to keep employees, communities, infrastructure and equipment safe. From acoustic tools that can hear the health of a track to machine visioning that can see defects on passing rail cars, these advancements help guide maintenance planning, which has led to greater safety, accuracy and productivity than ever before.
**Advanced inspection technology increases safety.**

In addition to conducting the various inspections required by FRA, railroads have, for decades, voluntarily invested in testing, implementing and advocating for advanced inspection technology to supplement manual inspections. Moving forward, more automated technologies allow further progress in challenging areas like reducing human error and improving grade crossing safety.

**Railroads have lowered the hazmat accident rate by 73% since 2000.**

Railroads play a crucial role in safely transporting hazmat, ensuring the well-being of communities, their employees and the environment. Beyond complying with strict regulations and operating practices, railroads have advocated for more stringent tank car standards, voluntarily developed the AskRail app for first responders and worked with the FRA to create routing software. When an incident does occur, railroads work with first responders to help families and individuals within an affected community.

**A well-run railroad is a safe railroad.**

Since 2000, America's Class I railroads have spent $439 billion on network maintenance and capital expenditures — including to modernize tracks, bridges, tunnels, rail cars and locomotives — while the train accident rate has decreased 28% since 2000. For its last two report cards, the American Society of Civil Engineers has awarded rail its highest grade. The grade crossing collision rate was down 23% in 2022 compared to 2000.

From launching the See Tracks, Think Train! campaign to participating in the annual Rail Safety Week, railroads support Operation Lifesaver, Inc. (OLI), a non-profit public safety education and awareness organization. Railroads also work closely with government and community organizations and spend hundreds of millions of dollars each year to maintain and improve grade crossings and implement new technologies.

**Freight railroads are building a network that can withstand climate-related hazards.**

Through innovative technologies and billions in annual private investments, railroads continue to adapt to meet the current and future challenges of climate change while continuing to deliver for the American economy.

**Freight railroads work with government agencies and public partners to monitor their networks 24/7.**

Following a regularly updated comprehensive Security Management Plan, railroads share information and identify, mitigate and respond to risks. Since 1999, freight railroads have maintained a unified cybersecurity plan. The rail industry was one of the first to immediately review, test and update safety procedures based on new threats after 9/11.