

# AAR Tank Car Committee

**Key Takeaway:** The TCC plays a vital role in ensuring the safe transportation of hazardous materials by approving tank car designs and setting industry-wide interchange standards that often exceed regulatory safety requirements. With the involvement of various stakeholders, including industry representatives and regulatory agencies, the TCC's oversight contributes to the remarkable safety record of rail hazmat shipments, achieving a low accident rate and a high success rate in reaching destinations without releases.

Railroads typically do not own the tank cars they transport; instead, shippers or leasing companies often purchase and maintain them. As common carriers, railroads are obligated to transport any freight, including hazardous materials, under reasonable terms and conditions.

The oversight of rail tank cars involves a multi-faceted system where industry practices sometimes surpass federal standards. While the Department of Transportation (DOT) regulates rail safety, including tank car specifications, it delegates certain safety matters to the TCC, such as technical design review. AAR's approval of facility quality assurance programs is also mandated by regulation.

Additionally, the TCC establishes industry-wide interchange standards for tank cars in North America, exceeding DOT regulations while maintaining oversight. This approach has led to tank cars with improved safety features, driven by substantial investments in infrastructure, technology, training, and safety efforts totaling over \$23 billion annually. Consequently, hazmat accidents have decreased by 75% since 2000, to its lowest-ever rate, with over 99.99% of rail hazmat shipments reaching their destinations safely.

## **The TCC improves tank car safety.**

AAR's approval of facility quality assurance programs is also mandated by regulation. Beyond regulatory requirements, the TCC establishes industry-wide interchange standards for tank car design and operation in North America under a voluntary agreement. While these standards can exceed DOT regulations, they never compromise minimum requirements or oversight. This system has led to tank cars being built with improved thermal protection, higher-grade steel, and enhanced valves and fittings, significantly enhancing tank car safety.

## ***Interchange System & The MSRP***

Because no one railroad covers the entire country, railroads are often required to interchange equipment, including tank cars, during their operations to transport goods to their destinations. To facilitate these interchanges, the rail industry, including rolling stock owners and repair facilities, voluntarily agreed to accept and transport shipments that meet a consistent set of standards contained in the Manual of Standards & Recommended Practices (MSRP).

## ***TCC Stakeholders & Functions***

The TCC comprises railroad representatives, shippers, and tank car builders and owners. Additionally, representatives from the Federal Railroad Administration, PHMSA, the National Transportation Safety Board, Transport Canada, and the Transportation Safety Board of Canada regularly attend and participate in many of the TCC's quarterly meetings.

## ***Ongoing Efforts to Eliminate or Alter TCC Oversight***

In 2016, a group of shippers and tank car owners filed a petition for rulemaking with PHMSA that challenged the current system of oversight for rail tank cars and requested PHMSA to adopt regulations prohibiting any entity from requiring compliance with tank car specifications more rigorous than the minimum DOT safety standards. The filing of this petition was in direct response to efforts by the TCC to adopt improved standards for tanks used to transport toxic inhalation hazards.