

FREIGHT RAIL SAFETY RECORD: YEAR-OVER-YEAR IMPROVEMENTS

Key Facts

- 2025 was a record-breaking year for the rail industry.
 - Accident and injury rates fell to historic lows in 2025.
 - The overall train accident rate is down 14% year over year.
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America's freight railroads continue to make significant progress in safety. Data shows steady year-over-year improvements, strong long-term gains, and clear evidence that ongoing investment in infrastructure and technology is paying off. This fact sheet provides a look at the industry's safety performance — including both the progress made and the challenges that remain.

YEAR-OVER-YEAR SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

Freight railroads continue to reduce accidents and improve operational safety across the network. These improvements reflect advances in training, technology, maintenance practices, and safety culture throughout the industry. Year-over-year:

- The overall train accident rate down 14%
- Derailments down 13.6%
- Human factors-related incidents down 19.7%
- Equipment-caused accidents down 12.1%
- Track-caused accidents down 7.7%
- Mainline accidents down 2.8% industry-wide and 6.1% among Class I railroads

LONG-TERM SAFETY GAINS SINCE 2005

The long-term trend is even more significant. These reductions highlight the impact of sustained investment, innovation, and continuous improvement in safety practices. Since 2005:

- The overall train accident rates are down by about 40%
- Derailments are down by about 46%
- Mainline accidents are down by about 37% industry-wide and 44% among Class I railroads
- Track-caused accidents are down 53%
- Human factors-related accidents are down 41%
- Class I employee casualty rates are down 54%, reaching a record low in 2025
- On-duty fatalities are down by about 67%
- Hazmat accident rates are down 75% since 2005, with recent years having the lowest rates on record

HISTORIC LOWS

Derailments
Equipment-caused accidents
Track-caused accidents
Class I employee injury rates

YEAR-OVER-YEAR IMPROVEMENTS

14%
 Overall train accident rate

12.1%
 Equipment-caused accidents

13.6%
 Derailments

7.7%
 Track-caused accidents

19.7%
 Human factors-related incidents

6.1%
 Class I mainline accidents

SAFETY GAINS SINCE 2005

40%
 Overall train accident rates

44%
 Class I railroad mainline accidents

46%
 Derailments

53%
 Track-caused accidents

41%
 Human factors-related incidents

54%
 Class I employee casualty rates

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REMAINING CHALLENGES AND AREAS FOR COLLABORATION

While overall safety continues to improve, some challenges require broader, community-wide solutions.

Grade Crossing Incidents

Grade crossing incidents were essentially flat year over year and show only modest long-term improvement. Because grade crossings involve shared spaces between roads and railroads, risks cannot be reduced by railroads alone. Programs such as the Grade Crossing Elimination Program and Section 130 grants play a crucial role in delivering measurable safety improvements. These initiatives help communities:

- Separate road traffic from train movements
- Improve visibility and signage
- Upgrade crossing protection technology
- Target high-risk locations

These programs underscore the need for ongoing collaboration, targeted investment, and policies that support proven safety solutions.

Human factor-related accidents

Further reductions in human factor-related accidents could be accelerated through the broader deployment of automation and advanced safety technologies. However, many rail operations are still governed by prescriptive regulations dating back to 1971, limiting the industry's ability to adopt modern, performance-based safety innovations. Updating these regulatory frameworks would allow railroads to apply technologies that can further enhance safety and consistency in operations.

THE ROLE OF INVESTMENT IN A SAFE RAIL NETWORK

Maintaining and advancing safety across the nation's 140,000-mile freight rail network requires sustained investment in track and infrastructure, workforce training, and advanced safety technology. Because freight railroads own, build, and maintain their own infrastructure, these investments support long-term cost efficiency, reliability, and supply chain stability. Each year, the industry invests an average of \$23 billion of its own capital — six times more than the average U.S. manufacturer as a share of revenue — to strengthen and modernize the rail network.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR COMMUNITIES AND THE ECONOMY

Freight rail remains the safest, most efficient way to move goods over land — and the industry's long-term trajectory shows ongoing commitment to even greater safety. For the public, businesses, and the communities railroads serve, these safety improvements lead to:

- Safer rail operations nationwide
- Fewer disruptions to local roads and infrastructure
- Stronger worker protections
- A more resilient supply chain
- Continued modernization of critical transportation infrastructure