

#### **ISSUE 28**

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## Watchman / Lookout

According to 49 CFR Part 214, Subpart C—Roadway Worker Protection (§§ 214.301 - 214.357), a railroad watchman or lookout is a trained employee who warns track roadway workers of approaching trains or equipment. They are also known as Train Approach Warning (TAW) providers. This is an extremely important and safety-sensitive position, so they must be trained and demonstrate proficiency annually. While performing these duties, they must give their full attention to detecting trains and communicating warnings to roadway workers. They should position themselves outside of the track whenever possible and communicate warnings at least 15 seconds before a train passes the worker's location and in time for the worker to move to a previously arranged safety location.



Watchmen/Lookouts should be equipped with prescribed warning devices such as whistles, air horns, white disks, red flags, lanterns, or fusees. They should not be given other duties while providing train approach warnings.

To assure Watchmen/Lookout assignments maintain vigilance, the people assigned to this position should be rotated periodically.

In 2009, FRA developed a working group called Fatality Analysis of Maintenance of Way Employees and Signalmen (FAMES). It is comprised of railroad employees, FRA, and labor union subject matter experts. In their analysis, FAMES determined that in a 25-year period, 89 fatalities occurred to roadway workers or lone workers.<sup>1</sup>

In this newsletter, we will examine several C<sup>3</sup>RS reports<sup>2</sup> that contain Roadway Worker and Watchman/Lookout concerns.

## Roadway Workers Must Heed Watchman/Lookout Warnings

In the following report, Watchman/Lookout requirements were in place. However, a Signal Maintainer crossed the track in front of an approaching train for a personal break.

• A Signal Maintainer walked across a live track while a Train Approach Warning was being utilized (advanced Lookout and Watchman) for adjacent track protection. The track we were standing in was Out of Service with a Track Authority and designated as a predetermined place of safety. The train approach Flag was up, the whistle was being blown, and the train horn was being sounded. He stated he needed to take a personal break and reacted crossing in close proximity to a train. I believe it was complacency that caused this action and caused a near miss. Some kind of sign clear of the right of way reminding people to remember where they are could have prevented this incident.

#### C<sup>3</sup>RS Expert Analyst's Callback Summary:

The reporter, a Signal Foreman, stated that there was a lapse in judgement from the Signal Maintainer who stepped in front of the oncoming train. The train was approximately 600 feet from striking the Signal Maintainer and the Engineer placed the train into emergency. The reporter felt that the advanced Watchman was in the proper locations to give advanced warning of oncoming traffic. There was a slight curve to the track at the work location and that is why there was an advanced Watchman in place. The reporter noted they could use inter-track barriers to prevent this type of situation in the future, but those are usually utilized for more long-term track work projects. There was a Job Safety Briefing after the event to discuss the risks involved with the decision the Signal Maintainer made.

### **No Protection Provided**

Even with all the Federal Safety Regulations, rules, and procedures in place, these two roadway workers were walking within the gauge of the track without any protection.

Going west on the Track, there were two track workers walking in the same direction as my train with their backs turned to me. It was a close call; they didn't get out of the way quickly. I placed the train into emergency for their safety, but it was still close, we almost hit them.

#### C<sup>3</sup>RS Expert Analyst's Callback Summary:

The reporter, an Engineer, stated there was nothing in the Track Bulletins and there was not a Watchman/Lookout at the location. The Engineer and the Conductor noticed the two track workers walking in the gauge of the track that they were operating on and started to blow the whistle. The track workers did not acknowledge the whistle or even look back at the train. The Engineer then placed the train into emergency, trying to stop short of the track workers. The track workers cleared the track just prior to the train striking them. The Engineer reset the air, and the Conductor got down on the ground to talk to the track workers and perform a brake test, but the track workers were already in their vehicle, driving away. The Engineer was shaken by the near miss and did not notify the Dispatcher of the incident. When they recovered their air, they proceeded.

# Adjacent Track Fouled, but Not Protected

A Bridge and Building crew was working on a bridge. The crew was given authority to occupy only one track but was occupying both tracks. An approaching train nearly struck a fuel tank that the crew had placed on the nonprotected track.

■ The Crew was working on Bridge X in foul of Track X with a backhoe and diesel container. I was the Engineer on the train and crossed from Track Y westbound to Track X, saw the obstruction, and sounded on the train horn. The backhoe Operator luckily was able to move the container out of the way within the final five car lengths before an impact could occur. I notified the Dispatcher of the incident. The Dispatcher contacted the Track Crew, who had mistaken only being given Track Z and not both Track X and Track Z. The Dispatcher took their Track Authority away and told them to stand by for a Supervisor to show up. I was very shaken up.

#### C<sup>3</sup>RS Expert Analyst's Callback Summary:

The reporter, an Engineer, stated the train came out of Track Y and crossed over. After coming around a curve, the reporter saw the Track Crew. A skid loader was within 1,500 feet of the engine. The loader was on the track they had authority on, but a crane was in the foul of the track the reporter was operating on. The reporter did not place the train into emergency, but made sure the lights were on bright, and the bell and whistle signals were sounded. The Track Crew was able to get the diesel fuel container out of the way about 250 feet before the train arrived. The reporter was operating under Maximum Authorized Speed and could have stopped in time if necessary. The Track Workers were working with Watchmen, but the area was not protected by a Stop Sign. The reporter mentioned the Track Workers thought the Track Authority included Track X and Track Z, but it only included Track Z.

- 1. FAMES RWIC and Lone Worker. https://railroads.dot.gov/sites/fra. dot.gov/files/2022-06/FAMES\_RWIC\_Lone Worker 6-2-22.pdf
- 2. C3RS DBQT. https://c3rs.arc.nasa.gov/dbqt.html

### **Did You Know?**

NASA C<sup>3</sup>RS has mobile friendly report forms so you can submit your report from your mobile device! Also, when you submit a C<sup>3</sup>RS report, a NASA C<sup>3</sup>RS Expert Analyst may call you to get more information or to better understand the safety issues you are sharing. It is very important that you return our call as soon as possible so that your identification (ID) strip (sent by the U.S. Mail) can be returned to you quickly.

The incoming call on your phone will not say NASA but will be from <u>area code</u> <u>650 or 217</u>. Remember, the





more information you include in your report, the faster the ID strip can be returned to you!

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