



# Inside THE RAIL

From NASA's Confidential Close Call Reporting System



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## ROADWAY WORKER PROTECTION

The Federal Railroad Administration Roadway Worker Protection Rule (49 CFR 214 Subpart C) requires railroads and contractors to railroads to devise and adopt procedures to protect their roadway worker employees from being struck by trains and other on-track machinery. The Rule also requires roadway workers to follow the on-track safety procedures in order to protect themselves and others dependent upon them. Each railroad employer must also have in place an on-track safety program, including rules, procedures, training, and equipment, to be used for the protection of roadway workers. It is imperative to abide by the Carrier's on-track safety programs to reduce the risk of serious injury or death to roadway workers.<sup>1</sup>



A Flagman has a very important role of ensuring the safety of railway employees and contractors working on or near the track. A Flagman is responsible for directing or restricting the movement of trains through the working limits. It is crucial to remain alert, aware and vigilant. Some common close-call themes have been identified and are highlighted below.

### Location of the Lookout

A Maintenance of Way employee reported a close encounter with a train while protecting workers on the mainline.

■ *Upon the approach of a train on Track X, I warned the gang of a train and made sure everyone was clear. Unfortunately, I myself was still standing near Track Y and did not notice the train was crossing over from Track X to Track Y. The train blew horn again and I realized the switch was reversed and was crossing over. I stepped completely out of the way but the train had already begun to stop. My failure to properly confirm the switch position and completely clear myself of all tracks is what caused this incident.*

### Forest through the Trees

A Conductor Flagman reported that an Engineer initiated an emergency brake application because he was unsure of a vehicle driver's intent. The Conductor Flagman stopped all contracted work at the location.

■ *I am Conductor Flagman and was flagging for Contractor south of Road, approximately 1/2 mile south of where a contractor vehicle was crossing tracks on public road. Engineer of Train was operating north towards the station and dumped train because he perceived operator of vehicle was hesitating when attempting to cross grade crossing. Said crossing does not have any gates or flashers. Operator of vehicle and laborers were told to contact me before*

*coming onto property. They did not call until they reached parking lot on east side of tracks after said incident. I heard transmission from Engineer of train calling the Dispatcher on the radio, notifying Dispatcher he dumped train because he was unsure of driver's intent. After hearing transmission, I called a Manager and stopped all work at site until the Manager's arrival. I believe the nature of [the] incident was due to the limited sight at grade crossing, especially with all foliage and trees.*

### Watchman Duties

A Foreman saw a contractor employee violate a safety rule and then noticed that railroad employees who were supposed to be flagging were nowhere to be seen.

■ *This track outage was in [multiple] track territory. Two south Tracks X and Y were out of service. Mainline Track Z adjacent to Track Y were in service. The work area was split into two locations that were close together. One group [was working] on the right of way and the other was involved in miscellaneous tasks on the right of way and parked track cars. One [track car, a truck, was] parked on Track Y and I witnessed a contractor employee standing on the step of the truck on the driver's side, the side nearest to the in-service track, with the door open. Having the door open and with his body position, he was fouling adjacent Track. An eastbound train approached and passed his location without striking him or the vehicle. However, he was in violation of the 4*

foot minimum clearance. [The] main concern here is that no flagman or watchman was present anywhere to provide warning to this employee to clear or stay in the clear. This employee was the Roadway Worker in Charge of flag persons. This individual first noted that his flaggers were spread out along the [large] work area and that the operator was told in the briefing not to exit the truck on that side. I witnessed no flag people to provide warning on [this] end of the work area where at least 5 workers worked whether on the right of way or track area.

## Communication is Key

A Foreman was nearly struck by a train due to not having radio communication with another Roadway Worker in Charge.

■ As we were approaching the stop sign at the beginning of the Working Limits, a Carrier A Flagman walked into the gauge of our track holding a phone up to his ear with his back to our train. His car was parked about 500 feet away from the stop sign and he was walking from his car to the stop sign. We sounded the horn, but he didn't move and kept walking in the gauge of our track with his back to our train. We put the train brakes into Full Service and stopped 200 feet short of the Flagman, who still had his back to our train. I stepped off the train to approach the Flagman about the near miss and tell him to get off the phone. The Flagman told me the Carrier A



Foreman in charge of the Working Limits that was protecting the adjacent track with Carrier B workers had a Carrier B radio, and the Flagmen at either end of the Working Limits had Carrier A radios. In order for the Carrier A Foreman to coordinate with the Carrier B Foreman on the adjacent track and the Carrier A Flagmen, they had to use personal cell phones instead of radios.

## No Authority

A Conductor Flagman allowed a contractor onto a live track without platform protection.

■ *Flagging for an outside contractor at Station. The contractor dropped a piece of pipe off the side of the platform. In order to retrieve it, I allowed them to climb off the platform and grab it after a train had cleared, without foul time. They climbed down. My thought was they would be back on the platform before another train would approach, seeing as one*

*had just passed. As they were finished grabbing the pipe, the train started to come around the curve. We cleared up onto the platform in time and did not disrupt the movement of the train and assured the Engineer we were all safe.*

1. Track and Rail and Infrastructure Integrity Compliance Manual. Vol 3.Chapter 3 <https://www.fra.dot.gov/Elib/Details/L19473> 09/03/2019

## Did You Know?

If you submit a C<sup>3</sup>RS report, a NASA C<sup>3</sup>RS Expert Analyst may call you if you do not include sufficient information or to better understand the safety issues you are sharing. It is very important that you return our call within 3 days so that your identification (ID) strip (sent by U.S. Mail) can be returned to you quickly.

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



A phone call from a NASA C<sup>3</sup>RS Expert Analyst will come from our office in Sunnyvale, CA, with a 408 area code.

Report Intake By Craft January to December 2019		C <sup>3</sup> RS Inside The Rail  Issue 8 March 2020 <a href="https://c3rs.arc.nasa.gov">https://c3rs.arc.nasa.gov</a>	Monthly Report Intake Previous 3 Months	
Transportation	3,829		December	267
Mechanical	141		January	295
Engineering	116	February	257	