

RAILROAD INCIDENT AND ACCIDENT PREVENTION

Human Error

Listed below are the most prevalent causes of railroad incidents and accidents:

- **Human Error** – 33.5%
- Track Defects – 27.9%
- Miscellaneous Causes – 15%
- Faulty Equipment – 13.3%
- Train-Vehicle Collisions – 8.3%
- Signal Errors – 1.9%

According to FRA statistics the most common human errors are as follows:

- Improperly aligned switches
- Failure to comply with orders
- Failure to secure or release hand brakes
- Giving improper instructions to crew members
- Railroad employees falling asleep
- Using brakes improperly

How can human error incidents and accidents be prevented?

There is no better way to reduce human errors than to teach safety, operating rules and processes to new and less experienced colleagues. Well-trained railroad professionals sharing their knowledge and expertise present a positive influence that has proven to produce reductions of human errors in the workplace. Teachers should really delve into the specifics of rules and processes and constantly communicate with students to ensure complete understanding.

On the other end of the spectrum, learning rules and processes, both in the classroom and in the field, is each employee's responsibility. Employees must be willing to initiate and participate in discussions during training and after, when jobs or tasks are assigned, to gain full knowledge of topics and a clear understanding of expectations to avoid confusion or misconceptions.

The re-learning of rules and processes is equally as important as learning them the first time. In thinking about when a book has been read, or a movie watched a second or third time, most people would agree they pick up on some new information or knowledge that wasn't ascertained during the first reading or viewing.

Proper rest, diet and exercise has been proven to greatly assist in staying alert and cognitive while at work. In addition, the breaking up of routines by performing tasks or jobs differently on occasion can also help.