

PROTECTION WHEN TRACKS ARE FOULED

According to FRA statistics, about 59% of roadway worker fatalities in the past ten years were the results of collisions with on-track equipment, highway vehicles, or roadway maintenance machines.

Rules, regulations and procedures have been established through the cooperation of government agencies and the private sector with the sole intent of protecting roadway workers required to foul tracks. Lives are lost and injuries occur far too often when proper rules and procedures are not followed to the letter by each and every lone worker or work group member.

There are several steps that must be adhered to each and every time roadway workers are required to foul a track or tracks. Some basic guidance is listed below.

CFR 49 §214.335 On-track safety procedures for roadway work groups, general.

(a) No employer subject to the provisions of this part shall require or permit a roadway worker who is a member of a roadway work group to foul a track unless on-track safety is provided by either working limits, train approach warning, or definite train location in accordance with the applicable provisions of §214.319, §214.321, §214.323, §214.325, §214.327, §214.329, §214.331, or §214.336.

(b) No roadway worker who is a member of a roadway work group shall foul a track without having been informed by the roadway worker in charge of the roadway work group that on-track safety is provided.

FAMES (Fatality Analysis of Maintenance-of-way Employees and Signalmen)

In light of recent fatalities involving roadway workers, the FAMES Committee has reissued their On-Track Safety Briefings recommendations as a reminder to all roadway workers of their responsibilities and rights when fouling a track. It is imperative that every roadway worker understands what protections are in place before fouling a track and whenever on-track safety protections change.

- If you don't understand the protection, ask for clarification; and
- If you don't think the on-track safety is sufficient, bring it up so it can be discussed and resolved.

Root Cause(s)

The root cause of the majority of collisions involving Roadway Workers and equipment can be traced back to one of the four failures below:

- Lack of proper training for one or all members of the work group;
- Failure to complete full and proper Job Safety Briefings prior to fouling track(s);
- A lack of understanding by all individuals involved in Job Safety Briefings and/or the failure to ask for and receive clarification; or
- No follow-up Job Safety Briefings when conditions change.

The majority of injuries and deaths that occur in collisions with equipment or individuals fouling tracks are due to human error. Railroads could consider reassessing and, if necessary, revising their rules and training for roadway workers. Follow-up discussions may be warranted to ensure complete understanding.

Employees must take personal responsibility by ensuring they completely understand the rules and procedures and by always, and without fail, completing Job Safety Briefings before fouling any track, anywhere.