

BUREAU OF RAILROAD SAFETY

A. Program authority

In accordance with Public Law 89-670, responsibility for administering the various railroad safety laws was transferred on April 1, 1967, from the Interstate Commerce Commission to the Federal Railroad Administration.

The Federal Railroad Administration's Bureau of Railroad Safety performs assigned duties in connection with the administration and enforcement of certain specific Federal statutes relating to common carriers engaged in interstate commerce by railroad.

B. Program benefits

The statutory and regulatory safety authority involving enforcement activities of the Federal Railroad Administration are:

1. *Safety appliance law*.—Power brakes are required on locomotives and trains so that brakemen will not be required to use the handbrake for the purpose of controlling the speed of trains. Cars must be equipped with automatic couplers so that cars can be coupled automatically by impact and can be uncoupled without the necessity of men going between the ends of the cars. Cars must be equipped with secure grab irons or handholds on their sides and ends for use in coupling and uncoupling, and with secure sill steps. Cars of certain types must be equipped with secure ladders, running boards, and roof handholds. Each car must have an efficient handbrake. Federal Railroad Administration regulations fix the standard height of drawbars on freight cars; the percentage of power-braked cars required in any train: the rules, standards, and instructions for installation, inspection, maintenance, and repair of power or train brakes; and the number, dimensions, location, and manner of application of other safety appliances required by law. (45 U.S.C. 1-16 and related regulations (49 CFR, pts. 231 and 232, formerly 131 and 132).)

2. *The locomotive inspection law as modified by Reorganization Plan No. 3 of 1965*.—This law applies to all types of locomotives used on common carrier lines. It provides that it shall be unlawful for any carrier to use or permit to be used on its line any locomotive unless such locomotive, its boiler, tender, and all parts thereof (1) are in proper condition and safe to operate in the service to which put, (2) may be employed in the active service of such carrier without unnecessary peril to life or limb, and (3) have been inspected from time to time in accordance with the provisions of this law, and are able to withstand such test or tests as may be prescribed. The law requires that the carriers file at stated intervals a sworn report of inspection for all its locomotives. The Bureau of Railroad Safety is authorized to make such inspections of locomotives as it may deem desirable or necessary, and is authorized to order out of service any locomotive found to be not in conformance with the requirements of the law. Accidents resulting from failure from any cause of a locomotive or its parts or appurtenances, resulting in serious injury or death to one or more persons, must be reported forthwith in writing to the Federal Railroad Administration by the carrier owning or operating the locomotive. The Bureau of Railroad Safety investigates all such accidents and prepares a full and detailed report of the cause of the accident. The law authorizes the Federal Railroad Administration to make public these reports in such manner as it deems proper. Neither the report nor any report of the investigation nor any part thereof shall be admitted as evidence or used for any purpose in any suit or action for damages growing out of any matter mentioned in said report or investigation. (45 U.S.C. 22-34 and related regulations (49 CFR, pt. 191, formerly 91).)

3. *Inspection of mail cars to determine their construction, adaptability, design, and condition*. (45 U.S.C. 37.)

4. *Accident Reports Act*.—This law authorizes the Federal Railroad Administration to investigate and issue reports concerning collisions, derailments, or other accidents resulting in serious injury to person or to property of a railroad. Under prescribed regulations, railroads are required to report by telegraph to the Federal Railroad Administration any collision or derailment on its line resulting in deaths or serious injury to one or more persons.

Investigations are made of such of these accidents as are of general interest to the public or when an investigation may lead to increased safety. This law also requires every common carrier to make a monthly report of all collisions, derailments, or other accidents resulting in death or injury to any person or damage to equipment or roadbed, arising from the operation of such railroad, under prescribed rules. The phrase "arising from the operation of such railroad"