

[DOT Home](#) [About DOT](#) [DOT Jobs](#) [News](#) [Services](#)



U. S. Department of Transportation Launches Initiative to Prevent Employee Fatigue and Increase Safety on America's Railways



U.S. Department of Transportation
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.
www.dot.gov/affairs/briefing.htm
News

FRA 17-11

Friday, August 12, 2011

Contact: Brie Sachse

Tel.: (202) 493-6024

Federal Railroad Administration Issues Regulations on Hours of Service for Passenger Train Crews to Avoid Fatigue-Related Accidents

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation issued a final rule today limiting the number of consecutive hours passenger railroad workers can be on the job. The new Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) regulation will reduce risk and improve safety for the railroad industry, and for the first time, differentiate between freight and passenger service.

Designed to reduce accidents related to fatigue, the final rule applies “fatigue science” to employee work schedules to determine maximum on-duty periods and minimum off-duty periods. The Department is engaging in a broad initiative to bring scientific data into work scheduling, and the FRA rule is the first rule in that effort to be completed.

“Safety is job one, and by focusing our attention on proactive risk reduction strategies like these, we will be able to reduce the number of accidents on our railways”, said Secretary LaHood. “This new program will let us recognize and prevent fatigue problems for passenger train crews before they arise.”

Through the use of fatigue modeling tools and data on human alertness factors, this new rule will guide the scheduling of train crews to reduce the likelihood of a hazardous work schedule. This rule recognizes the difference between work during daylight hours and work during nighttime hours when fatigue is most likely to occur. The final rule includes:

- Maximum on-duty periods and minimum off-duty periods for passenger train employees including locomotive engineers, and conductors.
- Requirements for railroads to identify schedule-specific risks of fatigue using an approved, scientifically validated, and calibrated bio-mathematical model of human performance and fatigue.
- Requirements for railroads to develop and carry out plans to mitigate fatigue risks before safety may be compromised.

The final rule also requires railroads to submit certain work schedules of their passenger train employees and fatigue mitigation plans to FRA for approval, and to provide fatigue training. Fatigue management is also a key part of FRA's Risk Reduction Program—an industry, labor, and FRA initiative designed to improve safety and build strong safety cultures. It seeks to identify and correct safety risk factors using predictive data beyond the traditional accident and injury data currently used. Recognizing risk indicators before an accident happens provides one of the greatest opportunities for improved safety and performance.

This final rule is authorized by the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008, which, for the first time in history, gives FRA the authority to replace the existing statutory limitations (first enacted in 1907) with a new set of hours of service regulations governing train employees providing passenger rail transportation. The final rule was developed with the assistance of FRA's Railroad Safety Advisory Committee, which includes representatives from the railroad industry, railroad labor, and other stakeholder groups.

[Click here](http://www.fra.dot.gov/rcc/content/pages/Passenger-Train-Hours-of-Service-Final-Rule-081211.pdf) (<http://www.fra.dot.gov/rcc/content/pages/Passenger-Train-Hours-of-Service-Final-Rule-081211.pdf>) for the final rule, which will become effective on October 15, 2011.

####
