

# FREIGHT RAIL SAFETY

## Key Facts

- Freight rail is the safest way to move freight over land.
- 2025 was a record-breaking year for the industry.
- Accident and injury rates fell to historic lows.

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Freight rail safety is the top priority for America's railroads. Railroads work every day with employees, suppliers, customers and government officials to protect communities, secure the rail network and improve operational safety. Through billions of dollars in annual private investment, freight railroads continuously modernize infrastructure, enhance training, deploy advanced safety technology and strengthen emergency response capabilities.

These sustained investments have led to measurable safety improvements. Freight rail safety performance continues to improve year-over-year as railroads integrate technology, strengthen standards, and reinforce safety culture:

- The overall train accident rate down 14%
- Derailments down 13.6%
- Human factors-related incidents down 19.7%
- Equipment-caused accidents down 12.1%
- Track-caused accidents down 7.7%
- Mainline accidents down 2.8% industry-wide and 6.1% among Class I railroads

## **EMPLOYEE SAFETY & SAFETY CULTURE**

Railroads prioritize [safety culture](#) through knowledge-sharing and training centers with simulators and virtual reality. Daily employee meetings emphasize teamwork and ongoing on-the-job learning. Innovations like drone-based bridge inspections not only enhance job performance but also ensure employee safety, a prime concern in freight rail safety.

## **RAIL SAFETY TECHNOLOGY**

Rapidly evolving [technology](#) complements the human skill and ingenuity that have made railroads the pioneers of American growth and innovation. Our approach ensures that technology enhances, rather than replaces, the vital role of our workforce to deliver safe, reliable and efficient rail services. Therefore, embracing technology is critical for maintaining freight rail safety.

## ***HAZMAT SAFETY***

Freight railroads are the safest way to [transport hazmat](#), ensuring the well-being of communities, their employees, and the environment. Beyond complying with strict regulations and operating practices, such efforts are integral to freight rail safety. Railroads have advocated for more stringent tank car standards, voluntarily developed the AskRail app and provide training for [first responders](#), and worked with the FRA to create routing software.

## ***GRADE CROSSING & PEDESTRIAN SAFETY***

Railroads are actively addressing challenges at [public grade crossings](#), collaborating with various stakeholders to ensure safety. Progress includes a decline in fatalities over the years, a testament to dedicated efforts in improving freight rail safety. Collaborative efforts include reducing crossings, installing safety devices, and partnering with Congress and entities to enhance awareness and fund projects.

## ***INFRASTRUCTURE SAFETY***

Railroads are dedicated to meeting the high safety standards applied to every aspect of operations. Across the network, railroads employ thousands of well-trained inspectors — qualified per Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) regulations — who [monitor and assess](#) the health and safety of rail equipment, a cornerstone of freight rail safety, and infrastructure like [bridges](#) often exceeding the federal inspection regulations.

## ***CYBERSECURITY & NETWORK SECURITY***

Freight rail safety also includes physical security and cybersecurity. Railroads maintain comprehensive Security Management Plans and share threat intelligence across the industry. Since 1999, freight railroads have maintained a unified [cybersecurity plan](#) and were among the first critical infrastructure sectors to reassess and strengthen security protocols following the attacks of September 11. Railroads continuously update cyber defenses to protect rail operations from evolving digital threats.