

Railroad Safety Advisory Committee Task Statement: Certification of Train Dispatchers

Task No.: 19-02

Date initially presented to the RSAC: April 21, 2017 (by e-mail); **presented again April 24, 2019**

Purpose: To consider whether rail safety would be enhanced by developing guidance, voluntary standards, and/or draft regulatory language for the certification of train dispatchers.

Background: The Railroad Safety Improvement Act of 2008 (RSIA) required the Secretary to issue a report to Congress on whether the certification of certain crafts or classes of employees is necessary to reduce the number and rate of accidents and incidents, or to improve railroad safety. FRA conducted an analysis and reported to Congress that since dispatching of trains is critical to the safety and efficiency of railroad operations, FRA believes that railroad dispatchers are candidates for potential certification.

Description: Review and consider the following:

- Review critical tasks performed by dispatching employees for safe train operations, particularly with the introduction of Positive Train Control (PTC) technology.
- Review training, duration, content, and methodology for new hire- and continuing education.
- Review background checks designed to prevent dispatching employees with active substance abuse disorders from "job-hopping" from one employer to another.

Issues requiring specific report: The dispatching employees' certification working group will consider the issues presented in the description above; report its recommendations to the Railroad Safety Advisory Committee; and if appropriate, develop guidance, voluntary standards, and/or draft regulatory language to address these issues:

- What requirements for training and experience are appropriate?
- What classifications of dispatchers should be recognized, if any?
- To what extent do existing requirements and procedures for certification of locomotive engineers and conductor certification provide a model for dispatcher certification?
- What types of unsafe conduct and to what extent should such unsafe conduct by a train dispatcher affect certification status?
- Do the existing locomotive engineer- and conductor certifications provide an adequate model for handling appeals from decertification decisions of the railroads?

Refer to/establish following working group: Certification of Train Dispatchers Working Group

Target Dates: Report initial recommendations and ongoing work plan to the Committee by no later than one year from the kick-off meeting date.

Disposition: Accepted

Accepted Date: April 24, 2019