

Railroad Safety Advisory Committee
Task Statement: Practices to Maximize Alertness and Reduce Fatigue

Task No.: 2022-05

Date initially presented to the RSAC: June 27, 2022

Purpose: To design and conduct pilot program(s) to analyze practices that could reduce fatigue and maximize alertness for train and engine and other railroad employees.

Background: To meet a requirement of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, FRA proposes to convene a working group under the Railroad Safety Advisory Committee. Shift work can disrupt the normal sleep-wake cycle and is associated with negative health outcomes, excessive fatigue, and cognitive impairment. Guidelines exist to help shift workers cope with irregular shifts and better plan their rest/work schedules. However, these tools and practices do not consider the specifics of railroad operations, social pressures, and family obligations. Existing hours of service (HSL) record keeping, and reporting requirements contained in 49 CFR Part 228, do not cover the advancements in technology regarding electronic record keeping. By engaging RSAC, FRA will consult with craft employees who would be affected by the pilot projects—including railroad carriers and representatives of labor organizations—on the design and commencement of a pilot program that considers the specifics of railroad operations in developing practices that maximize alertness and reduce fatigue.

Description: The Working Group will:

- Meet with rail and labor stakeholders to develop a consensus on which pilot program (s) would prove most beneficial in generating practices that maximize alertness and reduce fatigue.
- Review/revisit established interpretations regarding the HSL and 49 CFR Part 228, and how they apply to the current rail industry.
- Recruit railroads to participate in the agreed-upon pilot program.
- Design pilot program and related parameters collaboratively with railroads and labor organizations.
- Implement pilot program at participating railroads.
- Analyze data collected during the pilot program, and assess the effectiveness and feasibility of the pilot program implementation.
- Optimize sleep and work schedules, extend the capabilities of existing fatigue-management tools based on results, and make revisions where appropriate.

Issues requiring specific report: N/A

Sources: Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Section 22408, and the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008

Establish following working group: Work and Rest Practices Working Group

Target Date: ASAP

Disposition: Accepted

Date: 10/17/2022