



Federal Railroad Administration Track Safety Standards Compliance Manual

Chapter 1 *Introduction/General Guidance*

Office of Safety Assurance and Compliance
Track and Structures Division

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction/General Guidance

Introduction to Track Inspection

The Track Safety Standards Compliance Manual (Chapters 1-7 and Appendix) provides technical guidance to Federal and State Track Inspectors. The Compliance Manual provides guidance for enforcement of the Track Safety Standards (TSS). The guidance provided in this manual may be revoked or modified without notice by memorandum of the Associate Administrator for Railroad Safety/Chief Safety Officer. This manual does not modify, alter, or revise the TSS in any way.

Comments, additions, and suggestions for future changes should be directed to Regional Track Specialists for consideration.

Inspectors should refer to this manual as often as necessary for clarification of FRA regulation interpretation and policy. When an inspector is unsure of meaning or intent in this manual, the inspector should promptly contact a Regional Track Specialist for guidance. The entire manual can be viewed and printed online at:

<http://www.fra.dot.gov/us/content/460>

Safety

The first priority of the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is safety. Therefore, all activities are to be conducted with personal safety and the safety of accompanying personnel in mind. Inspectors shall conduct activities in accordance with the safety instructions contained in the General Manual. Roadway Worker Protection, Bridge Worker Safety, and Roadway Maintenance Machine Safety guidance is in the Railroad Workplace Safety Compliance Manual online at:

<http://www.fra.dot.gov/us/content/1719>

Track Inspections

An Inspector's primary duty is to conduct inspections to determine whether the railroads are complying with the TSS and Railroad Workplace Safety (Bridge Worker Safety, Roadway Worker Protection, and Roadway Maintenance Machine Safety). Effective inspection requires identification, evaluation, and reporting of conditions and practices that fail to meet minimum Federal compliance requirements.

Since the purpose of regular inspection activity is to evaluate the performance of the carrier and the carrier's representatives in conducting thorough inspections and complying with the TSS, an inspection of track inspection records maintained by the carrier as required by 49 CFR 213.241 and 213.369 is necessary. Determine the adequacy of the carrier's inspections by evaluating what is recorded on the carrier's inspection reports, and determine if these reports reflect the actual conditions of the track structure.

To conduct a thorough inspection, the following preparations are suggested:

- Obtain the names and locations of the supervisor's territory to be inspected.
- Advise the supervisor of the territory to be inspected and invite them to have a railroad representative accompany you.
- Set a date, time, and location for the inspection.

- If you must change the date, time, or location, make every effort to contact the carrier as soon as possible to advise them.
- Determine what, if any, transportation will be furnished by the carrier.
- Always have a copy of the TSS and the Compliance Manual as reference.
- Carry properly calibrated track measuring equipment (tape measure, level board, string line).
- If possible, have the following information before the inspection:
 - Timetables and Special Instruction for speeds and restrictions.
 - Current slow orders.
 - Recent carrier track inspection reports.
 - Train, tonnage and hazardous material information.
 - Current and recent program work.
 - Current carrier RWP program.
 - Current CWR program (if required).

For information on general FRA policy, refer to the General Manual Part IV Chapter 2 for issues such as property entry, refusal to permit inspections, forcible interference with official duties, and release for entry and strike or labor disputes.

Opening Conference

Before starting an inspection, Inspectors should introduce themselves to all present and obtain a list of individuals participating in the inspection. An inspector may then explain the reason for the inspection as:

- Regular – to ensure the carrier's inspection process is adequate in finding, reporting, and remedying non-TSS-compliant conditions.
- Follow-up – or “re-inspection” of a regular inspection to ensure proper remedial action.
- Complaint – of unsafe conditions by an individual, group or entity. Caution must be used to not to identify the complainant. It is not mandatory to divulge that you are on a complaint investigation, as it may compromise the investigation. Inspectors should consult with the Regional Track Safety Specialist.
- Accident – investigations caused by derailments or accidents, etc.
- Waiver – investigation for relief from TSS.
- ATIP – FRA geometry car inspections (Chapter 3).
- Special Inspections – such as focused inspections or program enforcement.

During the Workplace Safety Briefing prior to the inspection, all parties involved should understand that FRA's goal is to help the carrier improve safety, and we welcome suggestions and ideas.

Closing Conference

Upon completion of an inspection, the inspector shall provide the carrier representative a report with all conditions that do not meet minimum safety requirements. Field reporting is discussed in Chapter 2. The reporting of exceptions to the standards is discussed in Chapter 4.