



## SF 4072 Yardmaster Hours of Service

A Yardmaster is an employee of the railroad who is in charge of trains, train crews, and inventory within a railyard. This is different from when the trains are traveling between destinations where a dispatching center and automated railcar readers take over.

The Yardmaster coordinates all movements of locomotives, people, and equipment within the yard. This is not a simple task and can be very demanding. They act as a liaison between customers, railroad management, and railroad craft employees. You will normally find them at a desk utilizing the two-way radio, phone, computer chat function, and email, often at the same time.

In the event of an accident or incident in a railyard, the Yardmaster is the first point of contact. They relay information and direct first responders to where they are needed. Yardmasters know where the hazardous materials are in a railyard. They know where the employees are working. This information is fluid and not captured by railroad data centers.

In spite of all this responsibility, Yardmasters do not have a limit on how long they can work each day. They frequently are forced to work 16-hour shifts, multiple days in a row. **This is unheard of in an industry where 12 hours is the max for employees working in safety sensitive positions.**

**There are no federal hours of service regulations covering Yardmaster duties.**

SF 4072 closes the loophole left in Federal hours of service regulations regarding Yardmasters and we ask you to please support it.

Please reach out to Nick Katich with SMART-TD for more information.

(218) 310-7401 or [sld@smart-td-minnesota.org](mailto:sld@smart-td-minnesota.org)

## **SF 4072 Yardmaster Hours of Service Facts**

- Rail yards are at the center of our towns and communities and every type of freight from anhydrous ammonia to corn syrup may be found in them. A yardmaster keeps track of the inventory within a yard and while an accident involving corn syrup will just make a mess, an accident involving anhydrous ammonia requires a yardmaster who is not fatigued to coordinate emergency response.
- There are no federal laws governing or preempting the hours of service for yardmasters. Yardmasters may perform duties which include them in dispatching service or train employee regulation, but railroad companies in some instances ban yardmasters from performing these duties so they can force them to work 16 hour or longer days. This loophole must be closed and SF 4072 is the correct way to close it.
- The hours-of-service definition in this bill mirrors the industry standard for train service employees and makes sense for yardmasters too.
- Railroad companies have eliminated yardmaster positions in some locations where rail yards exist. The duties have not gone away, but have been added to other yardmasters in remote locations overseeing multiple rail yards.
- Knowing where railcars are within a railyard is not a simple task and is everchanging. For example, from the railroad company's perspective, a hazardous material car is located on track 3. From a community and first responder perspective, track 3 is 2 miles long through the middle of town and the ruptured tank car leaking propane could be anywhere within those 2 miles. The yardmaster knows how to translate railroad locations into locations useful to first responders. In this example, instead of just being told "track 3," the first responders would hear from a yardmaster to "enter the yard at 14<sup>th</sup> Street and turn north for a 1/4 mile." Fatigue from working multiple unplanned 16-hour shifts in a row would impair the yardmaster's ability to manage a critical situation in which they are a key figure.