



April 17, 2024

Senate Transportation Committee  
3107 Minnesota Senate Bldg.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Railroad Safety

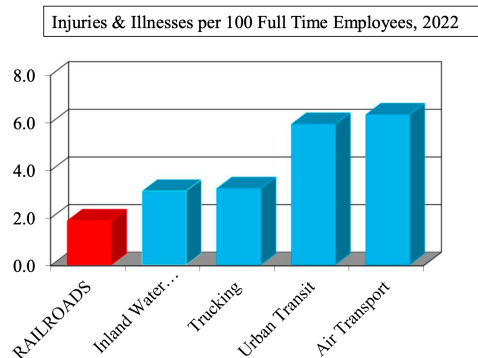
Dear Senators:

Thank you for the time and attention you have given railroad safety issues in your committee this year. Safety is a core principle of our members' operations. The industry is making great strides in reducing all accident and casualty rates. That context was missing during the March 13 hearing on Senate Files 3943, 4072, 4161, and 4162, which have been incorporated into the DE on Senate File 5284, so we wanted to share the most recent safety data from the Federal Railroad Administration and Bureau of Labors Statistics.

The last decade was the safest on record for railroads. While there may be year-to-year fluctuations, overall:

- Per carload, the **hazardous material train accident rate has fallen 75%** since 2000 and has reached an all-time low.
- For all railroads hauling goods of all kinds, the **derailment rates have dropped 30%** since 2000.
- Class I railroads' **mainline accident rate is down 42%** since 2000.
- **On-duty fatalities have declined 71%** and reached an all-time low. Railroads have lower employee injury rates than any other transportation modes<sup>1</sup>:

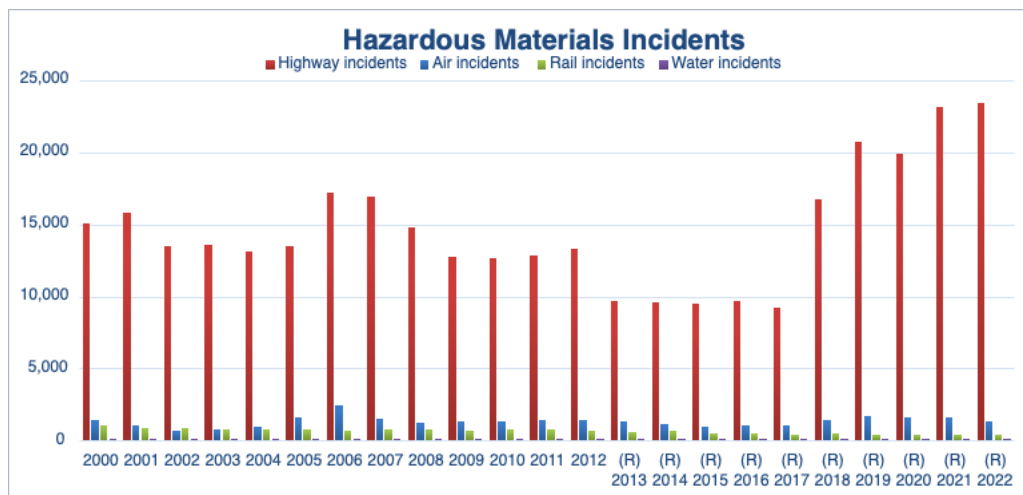
**Railroads have lower employee injury rates than do other transportation modes.**



<sup>1</sup> Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, [https://www.bls.gov/web/osh/table-1-industry-rates-national.htm#soii\\_n17\\_as\\_t1.f.1](https://www.bls.gov/web/osh/table-1-industry-rates-national.htm#soii_n17_as_t1.f.1)

Specific to Minnesota, the Federal Railroad Administration rail safety data statistics show that since 2014:

- **Total accidents and incidents have fallen 46%.**
- **Train accidents not at grade crossings have fallen 39%.**
- **Equipment caused accidents have fallen 66%,** in large part due to the industry's voluntarily network of wayside detector technology. These technologies are voluntarily developed, paid for, installed, and maintained 100% by railroads.
- **Incidents on mainline track have dropped 52%.**
- Over ten years, five derailments have resulted in hazmat releases. Driving to zero is our safety mission that we are 100% committed to. In contrast to trucking, data from the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) cited in a May 2023 account from CBS News<sup>2</sup>, reported that between 2013-2022, there were 493 hazmat incidents involving motor carriers on Minnesota's roadways versus 56 on the rail network.<sup>3</sup>



With this safety data in mind, President Biden's chair of the National Transportation Safety Board recently noted to Congress that "rail transportation is not only cleaner and more fuel efficient than transportation on our roadways, it is also far, far safer." We are proud of that, and we think our Minnesota legislators should be too.

We know there is more to do and had hoped to work collaboratively with you on policies that will build on the significant investment Minnesota's railroads have made in technology, track, and equipment and further enhance safety in a meaningful way. Instead, the provisions in Senate File 5284 misdirect resources from data-driven safety improvements and invite unnecessary litigation.

Sincerely,

Amber L. Backhaus

Executive Director

Minnesota Regional Railroads Association

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/hazardous-materials-trucks/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bts.gov/content/hazardous-materials-fatalities-injuries-accidents-and-property-damage-data>

## Minnesota FRA Data

Category	CY 2014	CY 2015	CY 2016	CY 2017	CY 2018	CY 2019	CY 2020	CY 2021	CY 2022	CY 2023	% Change From CY 2022 to CY 2023	% Change From CY 2014 to CY 2023	Total For CY 2014 to CY 2023
Number of railroads included	15	15	15	12	16	14	16	17	16	18	.	.	.
TOTAL ACCIDENTS/INCIDENTS 1/	276	223	182	204	181	158	140	150	146	149	2.055	-46.014	1,809
--- Total fatalities	15	8	11	6	12	9	4	10	7	6	-14.286	-60.000	88
--- Total nonfatal conditions	186	148	114	139	127	90	85	87	75	90	20.000	-51.613	1,141
--- Employee on duty deaths	.	1	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2
--- Nonfatal EOD injuries	125	102	74	99	74	64	52	50	53	60	13.208	-52.000	753
--- Nonfatal EOD illnesses	11	6	1	2	2	1	.	1	2	.	.	.	26
--- Total employee on duty cases	136	109	76	101	76	65	52	51	55	60	9.091	-55.882	781
--- Cases with days absent from work	104	67	54	70	51	48	38	38	41	29	-29.268	-72.115	540
--- Trespasser deaths, not at HRC	4	3	4	1	7	5	2	7	5	2	-60.000	-50.000	40
--- Trespasser injuries, not at HRC	5	4	5	4	8	5	6	6	3	8	166.667	60.000	54
--- Trespasser Incidents, not at HRC	9	7	9	5	14	10	8	13	8	9	12.500	0.000	92
--- Passengers kld in train accs or crossing incidents	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
--- Passengers inj in train accs or crossing incidents	1	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	3
--- Passengers kld in other incidents	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
--- Passengers inj in other incidents	3	4	8	6	5	4	2	3	1	2	100.000	-33.333	38
TRAIN ACCIDENTS (Not at Grade-Crossings)	58	51	44	47	33	30	28	35	33	35	6.061	-39.655	394
--- Train accident deaths	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
--- Train accident injuries	1	.	.	1	2	2	.	1	.	1	.	0.000	8
--- Human factor caused	22	20	14	14	19	12	14	13	13	13	0.000	-40.909	154
--- Track caused	17	14	15	14	6	13	4	17	9	12	33.333	-29.412	121
--- Motive power/equipment caused	9	4	3	5	2	2	3	2	5	3	-40.000	-66.667	38
--- Signal caused, all track types	.	1	4	.	.	.	1	1	1	.	.	.	8
----- Signal caused, main line track	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
--- Miscellaneous caused	10	12	8	14	6	3	6	2	5	7	40.000	-30.000	73
--- Collisions	1	.	1	2	.	1	2	2	.	.	.	.	9
----- Collisions on main line track	1	.	1	1	.	.	1	1	.	.	.	.	5
--- Derailments	49	31	32	35	25	26	18	24	26	31	19.231	-36.735	297
--- Other types, e.g., obstructions	8	20	11	10	8	3	8	9	7	4	-42.857	-50.000	88
--- Train accidents on main line 5/	21	7	7	7	10	7	6	10	11	10	-9.091	-52.381	96
--- Accidents on yard track	27	36	25	30	20	16	16	17	20	20	0.000	-25.926	227
--- HAZMAT RELEASES	.	.	2	.	.	.	.	2	.	1	.	.	5
--- Cars carrying hazmat	258	505	126	281	44	43	159	404	127	276	117.323	6.977	2,223
--- Hazmat cars damaged/derailed	32	22	13	12	2	6	23	49	18	39	116.667	21.875	216
--- Cars releasing	.	.	2	.	.	.	.	4	.	5	.	.	11
--- Accidents with reportable damage over \$100K	20.000	12.000	9.000	10.000	9.000	12.000	6.000	15.000	12.000	11.000	-8.333	-45.000	116
----- PERCENT of all train accidents	34	24	20	21	27	40	21	43	36	31	.	.	.
--- Accidents with reportable damage over \$500K	5.000	2.000	4.000	2.000	3.000	4.000	1.000	7.000	2.000	7.000	250.000	40.000	37
----- PERCENT of all train accidents	9	4	9	4	9	13	4	20	6	20	.	.	.
--- Accidents with reportable damage over \$1M	3.000	2.000	2.000	.	.	2.000	.	2.000	2.000	3.000	50.000	0.000	16
----- PERCENT of all train accidents	5	4	5	.	.	7	.	6	6	9	.	.	.
HIGHWAY-RAIL INCIDENTS	59	39	37	39	40	47	36	40	42	35	-16.667	-40.678	414
--- Highway-rail incidents deaths	10	4	6	5	5	4	1	3	2	4	100.000	-60.000	44
--- Highway-rail incidents injuries	27	18	13	20	19	11	12	18	9	9	0.000	-66.667	156
--- Incidents at public xings	51.000	34.000	29.000	34.000	35.000	39.000	30.000	32.000	32.000	31.000	-3.125	-39.216	347
----- PERCENT of total Highway-rail incidents	86	87	78	87	88	83	83	80	76	89	.	.	.
OTHER ACCIDENTS/INCIDENTS 3/	159	133	101	118	108	81	76	75	71	79	11.268	-50.314	1,001
--- Other incidents deaths	5	4	5	1	7	5	3	7	5	2	-60.000	-60.000	44
--- Other incidents injuries	158	130	101	118	106	77	73	68	66	80	21.212	-49.367	977