



March 3, 2021



ASLRRRA Seeks Clarification of FRA Emergency Order Requiring Face Masks

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) issued an [emergency order](#) (EO), effective March 1, requiring railroad personnel to wear a face mask while engaged in railroad operations. We have heard from

many of our members with concerns, asking for clarification on multiple aspects of the order.

As communicated originally via e-mail to all member primary contacts on Thursday, March 25 and with a follow-up on Friday, March 26, ASLRRRA has compiled and submitted numerous questions for clarification to the FRA on behalf of our members.

Some of the questions submitted by ASLRRRA concern mask-wearing requirements for railroad employees in office buildings, visitors to railroad property, socially distanced employees working outside and vaccinated employees. Other questions concern whether a railroad must supply face masks to its employees and more.

ASLRRRA will widely share the FRA's responses and any other clarifying information once they are received.

The FRA has provided an e-mail to ask questions: RailroadsMaskup@dot.gov, but we encourage members to wait for FRA to answer the large number of pending questions from ASLRRRA prior to submitting additional questions.

In the order, the FRA explains its reasoning, potential maximum consequences for non-compliance, lists of situations in which people are exempt from wearing masks, and people who are exempt from wearing masks.

Please check the U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) [FAQ Section](#) for additional information. Two items of particular note are:

- Following the question, "Does the mandate require mask wearing by railroad employees at all times or only when such employees cannot maintain social distance?" DOT states that ". . . a railroad employee who is the sole occupant of a vehicle, locomotive cab, or hi-rail truck, or a railroad employee performing duties **outdoors and not in proximity to any other persons** (e.g., a railroad employee performing a train or track inspection outdoors and far from any other persons), would have flexibility through company policy or employee discretion to choose not to wear a mask." (emphasis added)
- Additionally, DOT states on the FAQ page (as well as in the EO) that "per the CDC order, persons for whom wearing a mask would create a risk to workplace health, safety or job duty

as determined by the relevant workplace safety guidelines or federal regulations are not required to wear a mask."

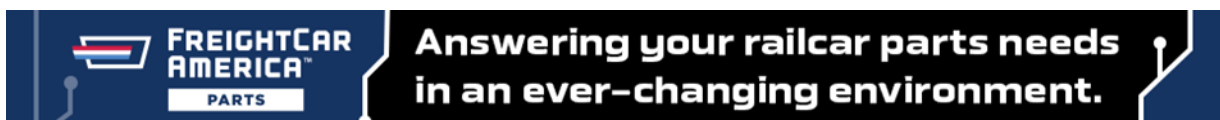
NTSB Issues Safety Recommendation to ASLRRRA Regarding 2018 Accident

The National Transportation Safety Board issued a [safety recommendation](#) to the ASLRRRA on Jan. 25 addressing the [2018 collision](#) of two Union Pacific trains in Granite Canyon, Wyo.

The safety recommendation comprises two parts. First, conduct analysis of radio frequency propagation in grade territories over which short lines operate to identify areas where head-of-train device and end-of-train device communication may be lost. Second, we recommend that your railroad ensure continuous head-of-train device and end-of-train device communication.

If you have areas within your territory that may be susceptible to communication loss, please mitigate the issue and check your radio transmission activity frequently. If you have questions please contact ASLRRRA's [Jo Strang](#) or [JR Gelnar](#).

The Association also recently held a webinar with the NTSB investigative team discussing the accident and safety recommendation, and a recording of the webinar is now available on the ASLRRRA website in the [On-Demand Webinar](#) library.



North Carolina DOT Accepting Applications for Short Line Projects

The North Carolina Department of Transportation is [accepting applications](#) for its Short Line Infrastructure Assistance Program, which offers grant funding for infrastructure improvements.

The matching grants will be awarded as part of the Freight Rail and Rail Crossing Safety Improvement program, which supports rail infrastructure health, safety and performance.

Grant applications are due March 26, and can be submitted through the state's [Partner Connect site](#).

ASLRRRA's [Member Discount Program](#) features grant-writing Preferred Providers who can help members prepare and submit grant applications.

Other programs currently soliciting grant applications are the federal [Infrastructure for Rebuilding America \(INFRA\) Program](#), due March 19, and the New York State Department of Transportation's [Passenger and Freight Rail Assistance Program and Railway-Highway Grade Crossing Program](#). New York grant [applications](#) are due April 22.

RRB Q&A Reports on Agency's Service Standards

The Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) is meeting its Customer Service Plan performance goals 99 percent of the time according to the most [recent edition](#) of its question-and-answer series.

March 3, 2021

Each year, the RRB evaluates how well it met the standards outlined in its [Customer Service Plan](#). The plan reflects principles of quality public service, such as accessibility, accountability and timeliness standards.

According to the report, the RRB's overall timeliness index during fiscal year 2020 was 99 percent, meaning the RRB provided benefit services aligned to Customer Service Plan standards 99 percent of the time. The report further breaks down timeliness for different categories, including processing different benefits applications.

SOFA Working Group Releases Safety Brief Discussing Industry Hazards

The Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) Switching Operations Fatality Analysis (SOFA) Working Group has released its quarterly Safety Brief, which discusses industry hazards.

The brief defines industry hazards, identifies some conditions that can lead to these hazards, and offers tips to help employees identify and avoid such situations.

A copy of the SOFA Safety Brief is available on the ASLRRRA [website](#), along with safety alerts and recommendations from the FRA's Fatality Analysis of Maintenance-of-Way Employees and Signalmen Committee. Please contact ASLRRRA's [JR Gelnar](#) with any questions about SOFA and FAMES information.

ASLRRRA Industry Award Nominations Open!



Nominations being accepted for 2021 Safety Person, Safety Professional, Business Development, and Veterans Engagement Awards. **Nominations due by March 5!** *Click to learn more...*



Baker Quoted in Announcement of Bill to Improve RRIF Program

Senators John Thune (R-S.D.) and Maggie Hassan (D-N.H.) [reintroduced](#) a bill that would improve the Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) loan program.

ASLRRRA President Chuck Baker was featured in a press release from Thune's office announcing the bill.

"This legislation would improve the RRIF program and make it more viable for short lines," said Baker. "It addresses several important issues that have been hurdles to participation in the RRIF program for our short line members, including some solutions that are being piloted in the RRIF Express program."

The [Railroad Rehabilitation and Financing Innovation Act](#) would provide dedicated funding for RRIF financing costs, streamline the application process and extend loan terms for certain assets.

Register Now for a Virtual Railroad Day on Capitol Hill and Connect with Lawmakers Without Leaving Home

March 3, 2021

Joining Railroad Day on Capitol Hill has never been easier, because this year's two-day virtual format allows railroad employees, shippers, suppliers, labor rail representatives and other industry stakeholders from Alaska to Maine to join the conversation without packing a suitcase or booking a hotel room.

This year, meetings will take place via Zoom, and will be held April 13 and 14. Those interested in attending, who may have been unable to travel to Washington, D.C. for previous years' in-person events, now have a chance to make their voices heard. There are also no registration fees, so participation is completely free.

[Registration is now open](#) for Railroad Day, and ASLRRRA highly encourages its members to sign up. Participants will be scheduled for meetings directly relevant to their businesses, and can engage Congressional members and staff without committing to an entire day's worth of meetings.

Railroad Day offers a unique opportunity for those in the rail industry to build connections with federal lawmakers, and the number of participants and their geographic diversity makes this the most effective way to communicate industry priorities to Congress. Those who participate help legislators know the real people affected by their laws and policy decisions.

To help participants prepare for their Zoom calls, ASLRRRA will hold informational Zoom meetings for registered attendees. These sessions offer an opportunity to test Zoom capabilities, review key messaging and understand how meetings will run.

The Association is also looking for sponsors for this year's event. Sponsor funding will help cover the cost of hosting dozens of online meetings at a time. Sponsors will be recognized in a number of ways, including exposure on ASLRRRA's website, social media accounts and in targeted emails. Contact ASLRRRA's Vice President of Meetings [Amy Westerman](#) for more information about sponsorships.

Join us VIA ZOOM April 13 and 14 for
2021 RAILROAD DAY
Click here to learn more and register!



ASLRRRA New Members

Know a company that would benefit from joining and participating in ASLRRRA? Please contact ASLRRRA's Vice President of Membership and Business Development [Kathy Keeney](#) via email or on (202) 585-3439.



ASLRRRA Welcomes Railroad Contract Services

ASLRRRA is pleased to welcome to its membership rolls [Railroad Contract Services LLC](#), based in Janesville, Wis., which provides contract services for railroads covering each time zone in the United States.

RailRCS services include train dispatching, compliance and freight agency customer service. It currently manages short lines railroads with over 1,475 miles of main line track. Our primary contact is Chief Train Dispatcher [Samuel L. Peterson](#), who can be reached on (608) 481-3669.

ASLRRRA Announcements

Last Call for Nominations for ASLRRRA's Annual Industry Awards

The deadline is this Friday to submit nominations for ASLRRRA's industry awards. Winners of each award will be recognized in a number of ways, including through ASLRRRA publications and social media accounts.

Read descriptions of each award below and learn how to nominate deserving companies and/or individuals.

[Business Development Awards](#): The ASLRRRA Business Development Award recognizes Class II and III railroads that have designed and enacted the most innovative and successful business-building initiatives in the small railroad industry. Previous winners have been recognized for accomplishments including shifting business from truck to rail, building new rail-located facilities and leveraging transload opportunities. Click [here](#) for award criteria and nomination procedures. Please submit nominations to ASLRRRA's Vice President of Communications [Amy Krouse](#).

[Veterans Engagement Award](#): ASLRRRA's Veterans Engagement Award honors employers who demonstrate positive policies toward U.S. veterans and who implement unique programs and practices to hire, recognize, support, and engage with veterans in the workplace and the broader community. Award criteria can be found [here](#), and nominations can be submitted [online](#). Contact ASLRRRA's Senior Vice President of Education and Business Services [Sabrina Waiss](#) with questions.

Nominations are also still open for ASLRRRA's [Safety Person of the Year Award](#) and [Safety Professional of the Year Award](#). Safety person award criteria can be found [here](#), and nominations can be submitted [online](#), while safety professional award criteria is [here](#), and nominations can be submitted [here](#). Contact ASLRRRA's Assistant Vice President of Legislative and Regulatory Policy [Crystal Gitchell](#) with questions.

Increase Your Company's Visibility with a Webinar Sponsorship

ASLRRA members aiming to increase their visibility with potential customers can now sponsor select webinars. This is a new sponsorship opportunity with big impact - the sponsor video for our recent webinar series on FRA Part 243 has been viewed by more than 560 individuals accessing the live and recorded sessions.

A limited number of sponsorships are available throughout the year. Please contact ASLRRA's [Sabrina Waiss](#) for more information.

Elavon Offers Payment Processing Services Through ASLRRA's Member Discount Program

ASLRRA's Member Discount Program features vetted Preferred Providers who offer discounted services and products to Association members. One of these providers is Elavon.

Elavon is a leading payment processor providing short line railroads and suppliers with innovative payment solutions to enhance your business. Elavon's simple, cost effective payment processing program is backed by the highest standard of customer service. Plus, ASLRRA members receive preferred partner pricing.

Advantages of choosing Elavon include a full range of payment types; the latest payment technology; data security; 24/7/365 customer service access and dedicated account manager; and convenient, easily accessible reporting from any web browser.

Visit our [Member Discount Program page](#) to learn more and start saving today.

ASLRRA Out and About

Mike Ogborn Named Chair of Colorado Council

ASLRRA consultant Mike Ogborn has been elected to a two-year term as chair of the Colorado Freight Advisory Council (FAC). FAC members represent a cross-section of freight industry stakeholders.

The FAC advises the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) on freight-related issues, priorities, projects and funding needs; educates the public and other stakeholders on the needs of the freight transportation system in Colorado; and provides guidance on policy and planning level activities and identifies strategies and tactics to address the operational needs of the system.



Elavon is a leading payment processor providing short line railroads and suppliers with innovative payment solutions to enhance your business.

Visit aslrra.org to learn more about this Preferred Provider.





ASLRRRA Webinars – Live or On-Demand

Upcoming Webinars

[Part 240/242: Harmonization of Certification](#) - March 10, 2021

The Federal Railroad Administration's Kevin Lewis discusses the FRA's work on revising its regulation governing the qualification and certification of locomotive engineers to make it consistent with its regulation for the qualification and certification of conductors. At

the end of the presentation, Lewis will be joined by ASLRRRA's JR Gelnar to help field audience questions. Registration is free for ASLRRRA members.

[Part 225 Back to Basics, Part 3: Highway-Rail Grade Crossing](#) - March 11, 2021

In the last of this three-part series, representatives from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) will discuss Reporting/Recordkeeping Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Accident/Incidents - FRA F 6180.57 & FRA F 6180.150.

Sponsored by:



[Rail Trends: Freight Railroads Helping America Recover](#) - March 16, 2021

Association of American Railroads (AAR) Assistant Vice President Luisa Fernandez Willey will discuss the current state of the railroad industry, the movement of key commodities, and leading economic indicators crucial in understanding the economic recovery. This webinar is scheduled for 90 minutes to allow for more questions at the end of the presentation.

View Recorded RRB Webinars to Better Understand Retirement Benefits and Eligibility

Railroad retirement benefits and eligibility are important to ASLRRRA members, so ASLRRRA partnered with the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) to produce several webinars discussing these topics. Recordings of these RRB webinars can be found in ASLRRRA's [On-Demand Webinar library](#).

Look for these titles and related financial recordings online.

- RRB Unemployment and Sickness Benefits (2020 - Covid-19 specific)
- RRB General Eligibility and Employee Benefits (2019)
- RRB Spouse Benefits and Working After Retirement (2019)

In addition, ASLRRRA offers more than 100 recordings covering a variety of railroad topics. Recordings are free to members and available by subscription to non-members. Follow the link above to learn more.

[Click here](#) for more ASLRRRA events.

Industry Events and Announcements

Southeast Rail Forum Early-Bird Registration Extended to March 5

The Southeast Rail Forum [virtual conference](#) will be held March 24-26, with early-bird registration extended until the end of this week.

The conference will focus on rail issues in six Southeastern states and the District of Columbia. The six states are Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida and Alabama.

Nominations for *RT&S* Fast Trackers Awards Due March 9

Nominations for *Railway Track and Structures (RT&S)* magazine's first-ever Fast Trackers 10 Under 40 awards are due March 9. The awards recognize railroad engineering professionals who have had a significant impact in their fields or within their companies.

Nominees must be under 40 as of Jan. 1, 2021. Winners will be featured in the April issue of *RT&S*. Follow this [link](#) to submit an entry.

[Click here](#) for more industry events.

Views & News is published by American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association. Please contact [Amy Krouse](#), editor, with questions or comments.