

Fatality Analysis of Maintenance-of-way  
Employees and Signalmen



June 15, 2018

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***Dedication:***

*The FAMES Committee dedicates its efforts to all roadway workers who have lost their lives in the performance of duty and to the families, loved ones, and coworkers they have left behind.*

# Fatal Accidents Under Train Approach Warning (Watchman/Lookout)

***Mission Statement:***

*The Mission of the Fatality Analysis of Maintenance-of-way Employees and Signalmen (FAMES) Committee is to analyze all fatalities and selected related incidents in order to make recommendations to reduce the risk of future occurrences and eliminate fatalities to roadway workers.*

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## Fatal Accidents Under Train Approach Warning (Watchman/Lookout)

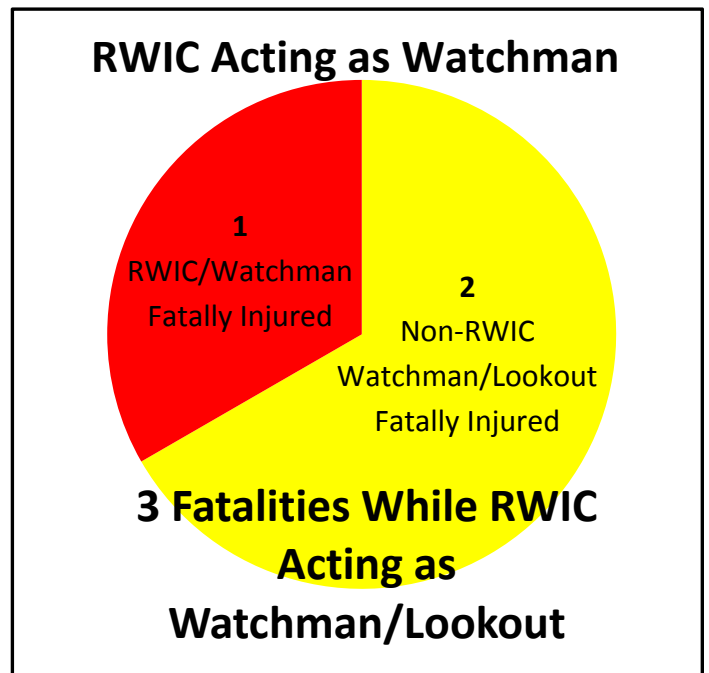
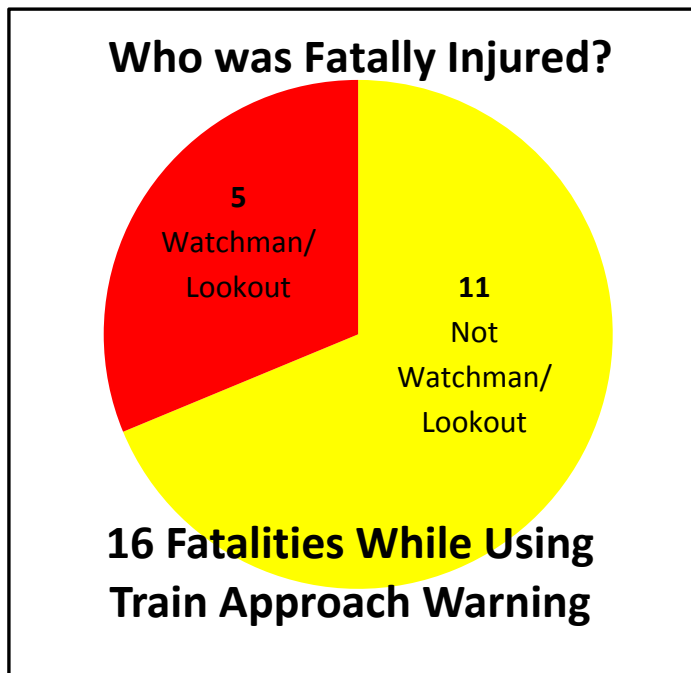
Following the implementation of the Roadway Worker Protection (RWP) Rule in 1997, the FAMES Committee, using available FRA accident data, estimates that there have been a total of 52 fatal RWP accidents, in which 55 roadway workers have perished, as of February 1, 2017.

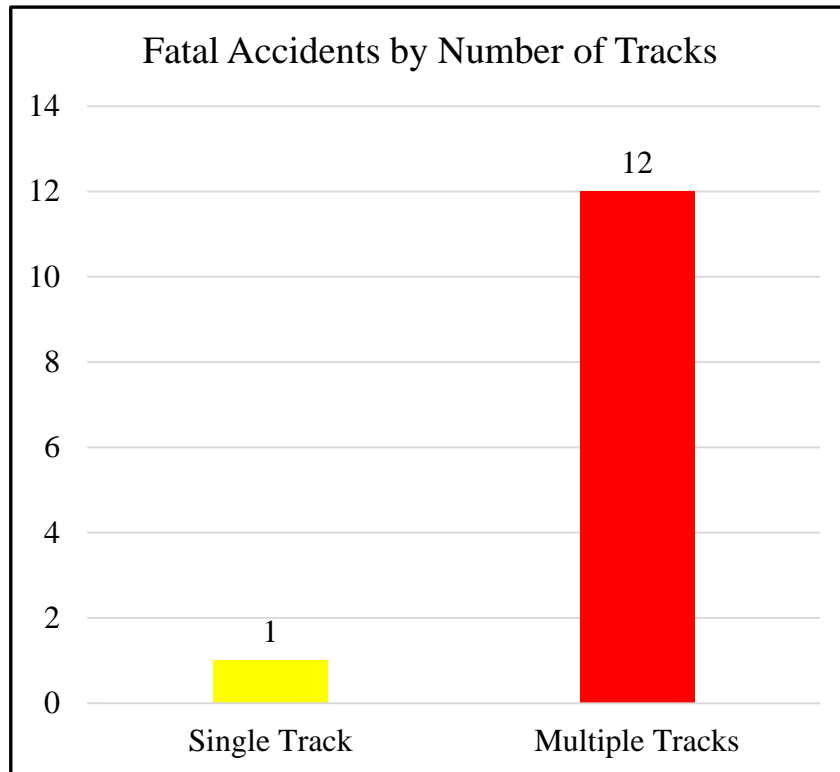
Since the initial release of these recommendations, the FAMES Committee has determined that at least 5 additional “Train Approach Warning” (TAW) fatalities have occurred. These fatalities are still under analysis by the FAMES Committee but FAMES felt it was imperative to update and re-release these recommendations.

One form of On-Track Safety for Roadway Work Groups is TAW provided by Watchmen/Lookouts.

- TAW (often referred to as Watchman/Lookout) does not require trains to get authorization from the Roadway Worker in Charge (RWIC) to move on any track(s).
- When using TAW, a warning must be given in sufficient time to enable each Roadway Worker to occupy a previously arranged place of safety at least 15 seconds prior to a train passing the Roadway Worker’s location.
- Watchmen/Lookouts must be trained, qualified, and properly equipped to provide warning to Roadway Workers of approaching trains or on-track equipment.

Of the 55 Roadway Worker fatalities analyzed by FAMES, 13 accidents resulting in 16 fatalities occurred where TAW was being used.





In 4 of the 13 fatal accidents, the Watchmen/Lookouts were not using prescribed warning devices, such as a whistle, air horn, white disk, red flag, lantern, or fusee. In one fatal accident under TAW, FAMES was unable to determine if the Watchman/Lookout was equipped with such devices. In the other 8 fatal accidents, the Watchmen/Lookouts were equipped with the prescribed warning devices.

**Findings:**

- In 5 of the 13 fatal accidents, *the Watchman/Lookout was the fatally injured employee.*
- In 12 of the 13 fatal accidents, the accident occurred in multiple track territory.
- In 3 of the fatal accidents, the Watchman/Lookout was performing other duties or not focused solely on the detection of approaching trains when the fatality occurred.
- In 1 accident, the fatally injured Roadway Worker was not in a position that allowed him to receive the TAW.
- In 4 of the fatal accidents, trains were running against the anticipated flow of traffic.
- In 2 of the fatal accidents, two trains passed in close succession and a Roadway Worker was struck by the second train.

## Recommendations:

- **Watchmen/Lookouts must focus their sole attention to the detection of approaching trains and equipment.**
- **Watchmen/Lookouts should position themselves outside the foul of any track whenever possible.** If a Watchman/Lookout must foul a track to provide protection for a work group, when the work group is notified to clear, the Watchman/Lookout must also clear.

*A predetermined place of safety must not be a live track.*

- Whenever environmental or working conditions change that could interfere with a Watchman/Lookout's ability to detect the approach of a train or provide appropriate warning, the Watchman/Lookout must immediately clear Roadway Workers from the tracks until proper protection can be established.
- Watchmen/Lookouts should take into consideration that passenger trains are generally quieter and faster than freight trains.
- **If the work requires oversight or supervision from an RWIC, the RWIC must not perform the duties of a Watchman/Lookout.**
- The RWIC must communicate precise instructions and expectations to Watchmen/Lookouts during the on-track safety briefings and ensure that Watchmen/Lookouts have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and duties.
- During the on-track safety briefing, the RWIC must identify the method that the Watchman/Lookout will use to indicate when it is safe for Roadway Workers to re-enter the foul of the track.
- The RWIC should consider rotating Watchman/Lookout assignments periodically.
- Each Roadway Worker must maintain a position so he or she can receive a warning from a Watchman/Lookout at all times.
- Roadway Workers must not be in the foul of the track anytime they believe that TAW protection is insufficient or no longer appropriate. Roadway Workers have the right and responsibility to initiate a good faith challenge when necessary.

*Roadway workers have a responsibility to not only ensure their safety but that of their fellow workers.*

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*The FAMES Committee consists of safety representatives from a cross section of rail labor, railroad management, and federal regulators. FAMES is a continuous improvement process that relies on the candid sharing of available data and the views of its participants. To enable the process, FAMES explicitly refrains from making any findings regarding whether any past or present practice or protocol satisfies any legal duty or standard of care.*

*The views, opinions, and recommendations contained in this report are those of the FAMES Committee and do not necessarily represent the views, opinions, or recommendations of any specific railroad, labor organization, or governmental agency.*

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