



Scan for more recommendations or
Safety Alerts

November 5, 2012
Reissued: June 13, 2016
Reissued: July 26, 2023

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.

*In light of recent fatalities involving roadway workers, the FAMES Committee is reissuing the **On-Track Safety Briefings** recommendations as a reminder to all roadway workers of their responsibilities and rights when fouling a track. It is imperative that every roadway worker understands what protections are in place before fouling a track and whenever on-track safety protections change. If you don't understand the protection, ask for clarification; if you don't think the on-track safety is sufficient, bring it up so it can be discussed and resolved.*

The Importance of Effective On-Track Safety Briefings

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.

The Importance of Effective On-Track Safety Briefings

Following the implementation of the Roadway Worker Protection (RWP) Rule in 1997, FAMES has analyzed a total of 62 fatal RWP accidents, in which 66 roadway workers have perished, as of June 14th, 2023. The FAMES Committee analysis is based on the available data.

An On-Track Safety Briefing informs roadway workers of their on-track protection at the jobsite and is a vital component of the job briefing. **On-Track Safety Briefings and Re-Briefings are interactive discussions intended to provide an opportunity for roadway workers to ask questions, raise any concerns, and verify their understanding of the on-track protection.**

On-Track Safety Briefings and Re-Briefings are critical in preventing roadway worker fatalities. An analysis of fatalities by the FAMES Committee concluded an insufficient or nonexistent On-Track Safety Briefing or Re-Briefing as a possible contributing factor in 25 (38%) of the fatalities studied.¹

Initial Briefings

An On-Track Safety Briefing must be conducted with roadway workers before they foul any track. The briefing must clearly identify the Roadway Worker-In-Charge and the details of the on-track protection. Every roadway worker must acknowledge their understanding of the on-track protection to be utilized at the jobsite.

Before additional persons are allowed to join a roadway work group or utilize its protection, they must participate in a job briefing that includes an On-Track Safety Briefing prior to fouling any track.

Of the 25 fatalities associated with insufficient or nonexistent On-Track Safety Briefings, 13 occurred on an adjacent track. Consideration of adjacent track(s) must be a vital discussion point of the On-Track Safety Briefing.

¹ Of the 25 fatalities, five occurred in the same incident.

Employees working alone who are responsible for their own on-track protection must brief with a supervisor or other designated employee prior to fouling a track.

Re-Briefings

If on-track protection is modified or circumstances change, every affected roadway worker must participate in a re-briefing. FAMES analysis revealed that 9 fatally injured workers were not re-briefed after the on-track protection was modified or circumstances changed. The analysis also indicated an elevated number of roadway worker fatalities occurred following a meal period.

Good Faith Challenge

If at any time there are unresolved on-track protection issues, roadway workers need to exercise their right to initiate a good faith challenge and remain clear of the track(s) until resolved.

Recommendations

- Each roadway worker must participate in and understand an On-Track Safety Briefing before fouling any track. The on-track protection must be appropriate for the job being performed.
- The On-Track Safety Briefing should be an interactive discussion between members of a roadway work group concerning their specific on-track protection. Active participation is essential to an effective On-Track Safety Briefing. **Ask questions! Voice concerns!**
- The On-Track Safety Briefing is not complete until every member of a roadway work group truly understands the on-track protection to be utilized at the jobsite.
- Roadway workers are empowered to initiate a good faith challenge if they believe the on-track protection is insufficient or does not comply with operating and safety rules.
- Conduct an On-Track Safety Re-Briefing after meal periods or other extended periods of inactivity to remind roadway workers of their on-track protection.

- Conduct an On-Track Safety Re-Briefing anytime the on-track protection is modified, or conditions change which effect on-track protection.
- Anyone joining a work group or utilizing that work group's protection must participate in an On-Track Safety Briefing prior to fouling any track.
- Employees working alone must conduct an On-Track Safety Briefing with a supervisor or other designated employee before fouling any track.
- A culture of open communications among work group members is critical to establishing and maintaining a safe work environment.
- All members of the workgroup share responsibility to be observant of changing conditions or situations that affect their on-track safety and are empowered to request a re-briefing. **Take the time to do it right!**

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.
