

Good morning Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Cantwell, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for inviting the NTSB to testify today.

Rail is one of the safest modes of transportation. However, when an accident does occur, the consequences can be devastating, particularly for those who've lost loved ones or were injured. Recent accidents remind us of the need to be vigilant in improving safety.

The Board recently held a meeting to determine the probable cause of a 2017 Amtrak derailment near DuPont, Washington, which resulted in 3 deaths and 57 injuries. This accident is one of several Amtrak accidents that we've investigated over the past few years, including accidents in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Chester, Pennsylvania, Bowie, Maryland, and Cayce, South Carolina.

On behalf of the NTSB, I'd like to take a moment to extend our deepest sympathies to the families and friends of those who died in these accidents and wish the fullest recovery to those who were injured.

There were multiple factors contributing to the DuPont accident, but the tragic fact is, the deaths and injuries were 100% preventable.

Frustratingly, this was another crash that could have been prevented with positive train control (PTC). PTC is on the NTSB's Most Wanted List. This August, we will remember those who lost their lives 50 years ago in a collision of two Penn Central trains in Darien, Connecticut, that led to our first recommendation on PTC. Since then, we have investigated more than 150 accidents that caused over 300 fatalities and 6,700 injuries.

While the railroads are making progress toward implementing PTC, much work remains. Full implementation must not be further delayed and exemptions should be eliminated, including exemptions on the 1,400 miles of freight-owned track that Amtrak will be operating on without PTC. Additionally, the NTSB has recommended that the FRA prohibit the operation of passenger trains on new, refurbished, or updated territories unless PTC is implemented.

While PTC will greatly enhance safety on our nation's railroads, a well-trained crew is vital to safe operations. Our investigation of the DuPont accident found that there was inadequate training provided to the engineer. The Amtrak qualification program did not effectively train and test crewmembers on the physical characteristics of the new territory and did not provide sufficient training on the new locomotive.

The training deficiencies were evident on the recordings examined by the NTSB. This investigation reinforced the safety benefit of inward, and outward, facing cameras. The FAST Act required that all passenger railroads install cameras but left it up to the Secretary to determine whether they should include audio. The NTSB believes all railroads should be required to install cameras that provide both audio and image capabilities.

Finally, I want to stress the importance of requiring all railroads, including Amtrak, to implement a comprehensive safety management system (SMS), modeled after the programs developed and implemented by commercial airlines. Had Amtrak established an SMS program, this accident and many others likely would never have occurred.

The NTSB has long recommended the implementation of SMS in all modes of transportation, and we've recommended it before in our investigation of the 2016 Amtrak collision in Chester. Since then, with the exception of risk assessments for roadway workers, Amtrak has made tremendous progress in implementing SMS. While the program is still in its infancy, Amtrak is much farther ahead of the other railroads.

Congress has also recognized the importance of SMS. The Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008 required the Secretary of Transportation to issue a regulation requiring all railroads to implement a risk reduction program. More than a decade later, the FRA still hasn't implemented the mandate. A final rule was published in August 2016, but the FRA has delayed its implementation six times. Earlier this month, the FRA issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking seeking a

seventh stay of the final rule that would delay it again for an unknown period of time.

The absence of a sense of urgency by the FRA to implement our safety recommendation and the willingness to continue to jeopardize the safety of train crews and their passengers is unacceptable.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions.