



2019-2020 NTSB

MOST WANTED LIST OF TRANSPORTATION SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS



Fully Implement Positive Train Control

What is the problem?

Spurred by a deadly accident in Chatsworth, California, in 2008, Congress and regulators issued federal mandates requiring that railroads install positive train control (PTC) to prevent similar tragedies. PTC is a life-saving collision avoidance technology that stops a train before it strikes an obstacle. The first deadline—in 2015—came and went with few railroads meeting it; the second deadline—December 31, 2018—has now passed, with more than a quarter of passenger route miles and 83 percent of passenger locomotives PTC-operable. Congress has allowed regulators to grant extensions.

Since Congress issued its original 2015 deadline to install PTC, we have investigated many PTC-preventable accidents, including the December 18, 2017, derailment of an Amtrak train in DuPont, Washington, in which three passengers died.

Some railroads have been working hard and spending billions of dollars to implement PTC, improving the safety of many tracks and trains. According to the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) Quarter 3 PTC Status Report, issued in September 2018, five "at-risk" railroads still remained; they had installed less than 95 percent of their PTC system hardware and were in danger of not meeting Congressionally mandated deadlines or the criteria necessary for an alternative schedule.



On December 18, 2017, an Amtrak train derailed from a highway overpass near DuPont, Washington. Three passengers were killed, and 62 passengers and crewmembers were injured. In this accident, PTC would have notified the engineer about the speed reduction for the curve and applied the brakes if the engineer did not take appropriate action. Photo by Washington State Patrol

20

PTC-preventable accidents* investigated by the NTSB since the enactment of the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008

***Resulting in 24 deaths and 358 injuries**

Percent of route miles in PTC operation

As of September 30, 2018 (Quarter 3); source: FRA

Freight:
71%



Passenger:
26%



Related reports:

SIR-18/01: End-of-Track Collisions at Terminal Stations Hoboken, New Jersey, September 29, 2016 and Atlantic Terminal, Brooklyn, New York, January 4, 2017; Released 2/6/2018

Preliminary Report: Amtrak Passenger Train 501 Derailment; DuPont, Washington; December 18, 2017; Accident ID RRD18MR001

For detailed investigation reports, visit www.nts.gov

Continued on next page

What can be done?

The extended deadline for the full PTC implementation must be met, and no further extensions should be granted. Preventable accidents, injuries, and deaths will continue until PTC is fully implemented. The safety of railroad passengers, train and maintenance crews, and the people who live and work near railroads demands that railroads fully implement PTC before the extended 2020 deadline.

To address the problem of PTC-preventable accidents, the following actions should be taken:

Railroads

› Implement PTC now. All deadlines have passed; do not request any further extensions.

Regulators

› Do not allow any further extensions. The Federal Railroad Administration must continue to pressure railroads that did not meet previous deadlines and track the results of implementation.

› Continue to highlight railroads that met the deadline or are meeting the extended deadlines—and point out those who do not.



On September 29, 2016, a New Jersey Transit (NJT) train failed to stop, overrode a bumping post at the end of track 5, and struck a wall of the NJT Hoboken Terminal. Contributing to the accident was the lack of either a device or a safety system that could have intervened to stop the train before the collision. One person on the passenger platform was struck by falling debris and died; 110 passengers and crewmembers were injured.

Every day that full PTC implementation is delayed puts the public at risk.

MWL
MOST WANTED LIST

Critical changes needed to reduce transportation accidents, injuries, and fatalities

 twitter.com/ntsb #NTSBmwl
 facebook.com/ntsbgov
 youtube.com/user/ntsbgov
 instagram.com/ntsbgov
 flickr.com/photos/ntsb

NTSB | National Transportation Safety Board

The NTSB **MOST WANTED LIST** highlights safety issues identified from the NTSB's accident investigations to increase awareness about the issues and promote recommended safety solutions.

For more information visit www.nts.gov/mostwanted or contact SafetyAdvocacy@ntsb.gov

The NTSB is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident in the United States and significant accidents in other modes of transportation—railroad, highway, marine, and pipeline. The NTSB determines the probable cause of the accidents and issues safety recommendations aimed at preventing future accidents. In addition, the NTSB carries out special studies concerning transportation safety and coordinates the resources of the federal government and other organizations to provide assistance to victims and their family members impacted by major transportation disasters.

National Transportation Safety Board | 490 L'Enfant Plaza, SW | Washington, DC 20594 | (202) 314-6000