



# NTSB 2015 MOST WANTED TRANSPORTATION SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

## IMPLEMENT POSITIVE TRAIN CONTROL IN 2015

### *What is the issue?*

Positive Train Control (PTC) can stop many rail accidents before they happen. Congress has mandated that railroads implement it by December 31, 2015. Public safety demands that the railroads comply.

Imagine the engineer of a freight train suffering from the symptoms of the cold he has been fighting for three days. Although he feels a little better this morning, he is still coughing and tired. He does not notice a red signal, and does not stop the train. What happens next?

With PTC, the train stops anyway.

Without PTC, real-world results have been tragic. PTC is a system of functional requirements for monitoring and controlling train movements to provide increased safety. While the NTSB has called for a system like this for over 45 years, it still has not been fully implemented in our commuter, intercity, and freight trains. Without it, everybody on a train is one human error away from an accident.

For example, in September 2008, a Metrolink commuter train collided head-on with a Union Pacific freight train in Chatsworth, California. Twenty-five people were killed and more than 100 were injured. The NTSB's investigation revealed that the engineer was texting. He ran past a red stop signal and crashed into an oncoming train.

PTC would have prevented the accident, had it been monitoring the trains that collided. In the five years since the Chatsworth collision, the NTSB has completed investigations of numerous other railroad accidents that involved human error.

The need for PTC to protect against human error was driven home again on December 1, 2013. As people headed home from their Thanksgiving weekend, or downtown for holiday shopping, a Metro-North commuter train derailed in the Bronx, killing four and injuring dozens of others. The train's engineer had fallen asleep and failed to slow the train from over 82 miles per hour (mph) to the maximum authorized speed of 30 mph as it entered a curve.

PTC could have prevented this head on collision of two freight trains in Goodwell, Oklahoma



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### *What can be done?*

In the aftermath of the Chatsworth tragedy, Congress enacted the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008. The Act requires each Class 1 rail carrier and each provider of regularly-scheduled intercity or commuter rail passenger service to implement a PTC system by December 31, 2015. Progress is being made toward this lifesaving goal. Metrolink became the first commuter rail system to implement PTC, when it began a revenue service demonstration on the BNSF Railway. This demonstration project is a step in the right direction, and Metrolink reports it will implement PTC fully throughout its entire system before the Congressionally mandated deadline.

It has been more than 45 years since the NTSB first recommended the forerunner to PTC.

In the meantime, more PTC-preventable collisions and derailments occur, more lives are lost, and more people sustain injuries that change their lives forever.

Yet there is still doubt when PTC systems will be implemented nationwide as required by law.

Each death, each injury, and each accident that PTC could have prevented, testifies to the vital importance of implementing PTC **now**.

Critical changes  
needed to reduce  
transportation  
accidents  
and save lives



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NTSB on 

The NTSB's Most Wanted List highlights safety issues identified from the NTSB's accident investigations to increase awareness about the issues and recommended safety solutions.

The National Transportation Safety Board 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.

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