



NTSB 2017-2018

MOST WANTED LIST OF

TRANSPORTATION SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

Increase Implementation of Collision Avoidance Technologies



RAIL

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MOST WANTED LIST



Positive train control (PTC) is a proven technology that prevents train-to-train collisions, overspeed derailments, and unauthorized train movement.

What is the issue?

Even on our best days, humans make mistakes. Train engineers and crews aren't immune to mistakes and can become distracted, fatigued, or commit crucial operator errors. Positive train control (PTC), a collision avoidance technology, prevents mistakes from turning tragic by taking over train operation if the human operator is not responding appropriately.

PTC precisely locates a train along the railroad and enforces signal and speed restrictions. PTC is a proven technology that prevents train-to-train collisions, overspeed derailments, and unauthorized train movement.

Congress and regulators have issued federal mandates requiring that railroads install PTC; however, we've already seen delays in implementation. In 2008, after a deadly PTC-preventable head-on collision between a commuter train and a freight train in Chatsworth, California, that killed 25 people and injured more than 100, Congress passed a law requiring PTC implementation by the end of 2015. Many railroads worked hard and spent billions of dollars implementing PTC, improving the safety of many tracks and trains. Despite these efforts, though, it became clear that tens of thousands of track miles and millions of rail passengers would be left unprotected by PTC by the 2015 deadline. As a result, Congress granted the railroads an additional 3 years to implement their PTC systems.

In recent years, we have investigated a long list of railroad accidents—both passenger and freight rail tank car—that would have been prevented by PTC. We issued reports on the May 12, 2015, Amtrak passenger train derailment in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, that killed 8 and injured 185, and the December 1, 2013, Metro-North passenger train derailment in the Bronx, New York, that killed four and injured 61.

We have called for a system like PTC for more than 45 years, yet it still has not been fully implemented in our commuter, intercity, and freight railroads.



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What can be done?

The Surface Transportation Extension Act of 2015 requires railroads to install PTC by 2018. This extension should allow many more railroads to comply with the law, but we encourage railroads not to wait for 2018 and to implement PTC as soon as possible. Although the current law allows railroads to apply to the Department of Transportation for new extensions, we urge them not to do so.

PTC implementation must not be delayed any further. Safety delayed is safety denied, and every day without these lifesaving advances holds the possibility of another accident like the ones in Philadelphia and Chatsworth. ■

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.

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.

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Follow NTSB on

**Safety delayed is safety denied,
 and every day without these
 lifesaving advances holds the
 possibility of another accident.**



Related Accidents*

Date	Location	Accident ID
September 12, 2008	Chatsworth, CA	DCA08MR009
December 1, 2013	The Bronx, NY	DCA14MR002
May 12, 2015	Philadelphia, PA	DCA15MR010

*For detailed accident reports visit www.nts.gov

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**Critical changes
 needed to reduce
 transportation
 accidents and
 save lives.**

