

# **UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

## **Federal Transit Administration**

**[Safety Directive No. 16-6, Notice No. 1]**

### **Safety Directive Under 49 U.S.C. § 5329**

#### **Required Actions to Address Findings from Federal Transit Administration Investigations Conducted at the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority**

**AGENCY:** Federal Transit Administration (FTA), U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).

**SUMMARY:** FTA issues Safety Directive 16-6 to require the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) to address findings documented from FTA's "Safety Blitz" investigation earlier this year into vehicle securement for unattended trains in the Metrorail system. This Safety Directive is being released concurrently with FTA's Vehicle Securement Investigation Final Report (August 24, 2016). The Safety Directive mandates that WMATA complete six (6) required actions within the Metrorail system to address six (6) safety findings in three distinct categories of review: (1) redundant securement for rail vehicle storage; (2) rules and procedures; and (3) employee training.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** For program matters, Sean Thompson, Director, Office of Safety Review, Office of Transit Oversight and Safety, telephone (202) 366-3616 or [Sean.Thompson@dot.gov](mailto:Sean.Thompson@dot.gov); for legal matters, Candace Key, Attorney Advisor, FTA, telephone 202-366-9178 or [Candace.Key@dot.gov](mailto:Candace.Key@dot.gov).

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

WMATA serves the National Capital Region and manages the second largest heavy rail transit system (Metrorail) in the United States. Metrorail averages approximately 730,000 weekday passengers. Like other heavy rail transit systems across the United States, Metrorail faces challenges in maintaining the safety and reliability of the system, particularly as the system continues to age and public funding decreases. Additionally, in recent years WMATA has failed to allocate available resources appropriately to ensure that the Metrorail system remains safe for both passengers and workers.

WMATA's challenges were compounded by the lack of an effective State Safety Oversight Agency (SSOA) with authority to enforce safety compliance. This led the FTA in October 2015 to temporarily assume direct safety oversight of the Metrorail system until the local authorities responsible for funding and managing WMATA have established a new State Safety Oversight program that is compliant with Federal law and will ensure that WMATA conducts its Metrorail operations safely and responsibly.

Since the FTA assumed temporary and direct safety oversight of WMATA Metrorail, WMATA has taken a number of critical steps to address safety deficiencies in the Metrorail system (including implementing the "SafeTrack" program), but significant additional work must be done

to return the system to a state of good repair. The FTA supports these efforts and will continue to serve in a safety oversight role until the District of Columbia, the State of Maryland and the Commonwealth of Virginia stand up a new SSOA that meets the requirements of federal law.

Failure to properly secure unattended trains is a significant safety risk across the rail transit industry. Unsecured and unattended trains or equipment can move in rail yards and on the mainline track, creating the potential for collisions with other trains, equipment, or workers. The rail transit industry has experienced several incidents over the last few years, including one high-profile incident in Chicago in 2013. These events raise serious safety concerns and amplify the need for the proper application of safety devices, parking brakes, handbrakes, and chocks to prevent unintended train movement.

In light of these general safety concerns and three specific incidents in the WMATA Metrorail system since 2014 (including one incident in which an improperly secured rail vehicle collided with another rail vehicle), the FTA WMATA Safety Oversight team launched a vehicle securement investigation of the Metrorail system as part of a “Safety Blitz” earlier this year. The vehicle securement investigation, one part of a three-part “Safety Blitz” of the system,<sup>1</sup> assessed WMATA’s current rail securement practices in accordance with its internal rules, vehicle manufacturer recommendations, and industry standards/best practices. Through the investigation, FTA discovered a widespread lack of compliance with WMATA’s internal unattended rail vehicle securement rules for both revenue passenger trains and maintenance machines and equipment located in rail yards.

This Safety Directive identifies six (6) required actions that WMATA must take to ensure proper vehicle securement of unattended vehicles in the Metrorail system. The FTA will monitor WMATA activity to implement these safety-critical required actions across its system.

Additionally, the FTA intends to work with WMATA to review and revise all pre-existing corrective action plans (including corrective action plans relating to vehicle securement) as appropriate to ensure that WMATA continues to make timely progress towards meeting its safety improvement goals and fulfilling FTA requirements.

## **DIRECTIVE AND REQUIRED ACTIONS:**

In accordance with 49 U.S.C. § 5329 and the authority delegated to the FTA Administrator by the Secretary of Transportation, 49 C.F.R. § 1.91, the FTA directs WMATA to take the following actions:

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<sup>1</sup> The other two parts involved investigations of track integrity and stop signal overruns. FTA released the Track Integrity Investigation Final Report on August 8, 2016, and the Stop Signal Overrun Final Report on August 15, 2016.



<b>Vehicle Securement Investigation Category 1: Redundant securement for rail vehicle storage</b>			
<b>Finding</b>		<b>Required Actions</b>	
Finding 1	WMATA does not provide redundant protection when securing unattended rail vehicles.	FTA-VSC-16-001	WMATA must complete its assessment regarding the safety risks from unintended train movement in rail yards and the implications of widespread non-compliance with Operating Rule 3.126, and propose a new approach for implementing a redundant protection system that addresses this safety concern to the FTA for review and approval.
<b>Vehicle Securement Investigation Category 2: Rules and Procedures</b>			
<b>Finding</b>		<b>Required Actions</b>	
Finding 2	WMATA does not disseminate clear, concise, and unambiguous rules and procedures regarding vehicle securement.	FTA-VSC-16-002	WMATA must revise its Metrorail Safety Rules and Procedures Handbook and supporting Standard Operating Procedures to unambiguously reflect its new approach for protecting against unintended train movement in rail yards.
Finding 3	WMATA does not maintain its Metrorail Safety Rules and Procedures Handbook in accordance with its own rules and procedures.	FTA-VSC-16-003	WMATA must update its approach for managing Temporary Orders to ensure that expired Temporary Orders are promptly removed from the Metrorail Safety Rules and Procedures Handbook and supporting Standard Operating Procedures as required.
Finding 4	WMATA failed to perform a comprehensive rules compliance audit of Operating Rule 3.126.	FTA-VSC-16-004	WMATA must revise its "Yard Rules Compliance Checks" checklist consistent with revised Metrorail Safety Rules and Procedures Handbook rules, and ensure that employees conducting the compliance checks are properly trained on yard rules.

<b>Vehicle Securement Investigation Category 3: Employee Training</b>			
<b>Finding</b>		<b>Required Actions</b>	
Finding 5	WMATA does not ensure that its employees have a comprehensive and universal understanding of the rules for vehicle securement.	FTA-VSC-16-005	WMATA must develop and provide training to all rail transportation and car maintenance personnel regarding the new requirements for protecting against unintended train movement in rail yards.
Finding 6	WMATA does not ensure that its train operator training materials are updated to reflect the 7000 series rail cars.	FTA-VSC-16-006	WMATA must update its train operator training materials address the 7000 series vehicles, including the location and automatic operation of handbrakes.

WMATA will have thirty (30) days from the date of this Safety Directive to respond to the required actions set out in this Safety Directive, including providing additional information for consideration and proposing any equivalent alternate actions for consideration by FTA's Acting Administrator.

Sixty (60) days after the date of this Safety Directive, WMATA must submit a corrective action plan(s) to FTA that identifies the specific actions that will be performed to address required action specified in this Safety Directive; the milestone schedule for completing corrective action; the responsible parties for action and their contact information; and the verification strategy for ensuring the completion of required work.

FTA will review and approve (with revisions as necessary) WMATA's corrective action plan(s) and will monitor the agency's progress in resolving each finding and required action.

FTA will continue to conduct monthly meetings with WMATA to review progress until such time as FTA determines that these meetings are no longer needed or may be conducted with less frequency.

### **Petitions for Relief or Reconsideration**

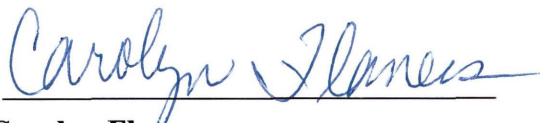
WMATA may petition for special approval to take actions not in accordance with this directive or may petition for reconsideration. Such petitions shall be submitted to the Acting Administrator, who shall be authorized to dispose of those requests without the necessity of amending this directive. In reviewing any petition for special approval, the Acting Administrator shall grant petitions only where WMATA has clearly articulated an alternative action that will provide, in the Acting Administrator's judgment, at least a level of safety equivalent to that provided by compliance with this directive. In reviewing any petition for reconsideration, the Acting Administrator shall grant petitions only where WMATA has clearly articulated material facts not in evidence at the time of this directive.

A petition for special approval or for reconsideration must be filed within thirty (30) days from the date of this directive.

### **Enforcement**

Any violation of this directive or the terms of any written plan adopted pursuant to this directive will be managed in accordance with FTA's authorities under 49 U.S.C. § 5329, including but not limited to (1) withholding up to 25 percent of financial assistance to WMATA under 49 U.S.C. § 5307; (2) issuing restrictions, closures, or prohibitions on service (*e.g.*, mandatory speed restrictions, shutdown of a Metrorail line, complete system shutdown) as necessary and appropriate to address unsafe conditions or practices that present a substantial risk of death or personal injury under 49 U.S.C. § 5329(h); and (3) directing WMATA to use Federal financial assistance to correct safety deficiencies pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 5329(g)(1)(D).

Issued on: August 24, 2016



**Carolyn Flowers**

Acting Administrator  
Federal Transit Administration  
U.S. Department of Transportation