Safety Management Systems Implementation

Jeremy Furrer
Division Chief, Office of Transit Safety and Oversight

Advancing Rail and Transit Safety Management Systems: Lessons, Tools, and Future Directions

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Standing Technical Committee on Rail Safety Management Systems (AR016)

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U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration

Agenda

- Safety Management Systems Foundation of Public Transportation Agency Safety Program
- SMS Implementation – General Directive 24-1: Required Actions Regarding Assaults on Transit Workers
- Using SMS to build out Rail Transit Roadway Worker Protection Programs (RWP)
- SMS and Safety Advisory 25-1: Reducing Rail Trespassing and Suicide Events
- Available Resources

Safety Management Systems - Foundation of Public Transportation Agency Safety Program

FTA follows the principles and methods of SMS in its development of rules, regulations, policies, guidance, best practices, and technical assistance.

Per PTASP, each ASP will incorporate SMS principles and methods

See 49 CFR 673.3

4 Pillars of SMS

Safety Assurance

Identify emerging issues
Monitor after mitigating

Safety Risk Management

Conduct assessments
Develop mitigations

Safety Promotion

Develop training & communications using data

Safety Policy

Drive accountability with data

SMS Implementation – General Directive 24-1

Following FTA issuing a General Directive to address the significant and continuing safety risk associated with assaults on transit workers nationwide, the agency conducted an initial analysis of how transit agencies are responding.

The directive, issued in September 2024, required more than 700 transit agencies nationwide – those subject to FTA's Public Transportation Agency Safety Plans (PTASP) regulation at 49 CFR part 673 – to:

1. **Conduct a safety risk assessment** related to assaults on transit workers using the Safety Management System (SMS) processes documented in their Agency Safety Plan (ASP), unless the agency conducted a safety risk assessment related to assaults on transit workers in the twelve months preceding the date of issuance of the General Directive.
2. **Identify safety risk mitigations** or strategies necessary as a result of the safety risk assessment.
3. **Provide information to FTA within 90 days** of issuance of the General Directive on how they are assessing, mitigating, and monitoring the safety risk associated with assaults on transit workers.

Safety Management Systems: Lessons Learned from GD 24-1

Safety Risk Management

- Identify hazards
- Assess risk
- Mitigate risk

"what's wrong?"
"how bad is it?"
"how will we fix it?"

Safety Assurance

- Monitor mitigations
- Measure performance

"are our fixes working?"
"are we meeting our safety objectives?"

Lessons Learned from GD 24-1

Agencies were able to leverage their **Safety Risk Management** processes

- *Only 10% of agencies had conducted safety risk assessments on the topic in 12 months prior to GD 24-1*

Safety Assurance processes proved more challenging for the industry

- *While agencies were generally able to assess safety risk, monitoring the effectiveness of mitigations proved more difficult*

Role of Safety Management System in Rail Transit Roadway Worker Protection Programs

Activities conducted to carry out RWP safety standards must be part of the RTA's Safety Management System (SMS).

Examples: Transit agency use of SMS with regards to training, virtual job briefings

- National Transit Safety Board recommendation on job safety briefings
- Using SMS to determine if virtual vs. in person safety briefings are appropriate

Safety Advisory 25-1: Reducing Rail Trespassing and Suicide Events

- Published to the FTA's website on November 24, 2025
- Upward trend in trespassing and suicide events identified as a concern
- Recommends Rail Transit Agencies (RTAs) use their Safety Management Systems to analyze and address the concern

Trespasser- and suicide-related events are the leading source of fatalities in the transit industry, accounting for **50% of all transit-related fatalities in calendar year 2024.**

Available Resources

RWP Website

FTASystemSafety@dot.gov

PTASP Technical Assistance Center

Subscribe to GovDelivery for updates!

Thank you

Jeremy Furrer
Division Chief
Office of Transit Safety and Oversight
jeremy.furrer@dot.gov