

FRA Issues Safety Advisory on Maintenance Equipment

Friday, January 26, 2007 (Washington, DC) In response to a deadly derailment in November of last year, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) today issued a safety advisory to railroad industry owners and operators urging them to ensure specialized maintenance equipment is only operated by fully qualified individuals and is properly inspected.

“I cannot emphasize enough the responsibility and necessity of railroads and contractors that use these vehicles to operate them in the safest manner possible,” said FRA Administrator Joseph H. Boardman. “We have zero tolerance for careless mistakes that needlessly cause harm or injury to workers, contractors or the public at large,” he said.

The Safety Advisory is being issued in part as a response to a serious November 9, 2006 accident involving a rail grinder train. The maintenance-of-way (MOW) train derailed 10 of its 13 cars while traveling from Sparks, Nevada, to Bakersfield, California. As a result, two employees of a rail services contractor were fatally injured. FRA’s preliminary investigation of the accident has revealed that neither of the train’s operators was familiar with the specific rail line they were operating over. In addition, FRA inspectors found numerous mechanical defects on the MOW train.

In addition, it has become apparent to FRA that some owners and operators of such equipment do not fully understand which federal safety regulations they must comply with given their unique design and operational characteristics. Consequently, FRA is providing detailed guidance to clarify which regulations cover the different types of equipment.

Administrator Boardman noted that failure of industry members to take immediate and appropriate action to remedy the problems identified in the advisory may prompt FRA to pursue other corrective measures available under its safety authority and jurisdiction.

In issuing the advisory, FRA is providing detailed guidance on the statutory and regulatory requirements governing such equipment. The operator of the train involved in the November 2006 accident has voluntarily ceased operation of their rail-grinding vehicles until FRA has completed safety inspections on all trains and similar maintenance equipment owned by other service providers.

(The proceeding was issued in an FRA Press Release on January 26, 2007. BMWED will post the full text of the advisory once it becomes available)

###