

organizations have worked with FMCSA to develop and promote research and technology designed to achieve mutual commercial motor vehicle safety goals and objectives. Time will be allotted for questions and answers following each panel, and dialogue between attendees and presenters is encouraged.

Where and When: Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, the Delaware Room, 2660 Woodley Road, NW., Washington, DC 20008, on Sunday, January 11, 2004, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Registration: This forum is listed as a session in the TRB Annual Meeting Program and all registrants are welcome to attend. TRB registration is not required to attend the forum and it is open to the public at no cost. To register for the TRB Annual Meeting, visit www.trb.org. To attend the forum only, send an e-mail to: R&TPartnerships@fmcsa.dot.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Albert Alvarez, Office of Research and Technology (MC-RTR), Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, 400 Virginia Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20024; telephone (202) 385-2387 or e-mail albert.alvarez@fmcsa.dot.gov. Or, contact Mike Lange in the same office at (202) 385-2373 or e-mail michael.lang@fmcsa.dot.gov. Office hours are from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., E.S.T., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Forum attendees will receive an Information Packet on current programs the Office of Research and Technology is working on. While the forum will be open to the public, it will be limited to the space available. Individuals requiring special needs/accommodations (sign, reader, etc.), please call Joalice Cole at (202) 334-2287, or e-mail jcole@nas.edu.

Issued on: November 20, 2003.

Annette M. Sandberg,
Administration.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Railroad Administration

[Docket No. FRA-2000-7257; Notice No. 31]

Railroad Safety Advisory Committee ("RSAC"); Working Group Activity Update

AGENCY: Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Department of Transportation (DOT).

ACTION: Announcement of Railroad Safety Advisory Committee (RSAC) Working Group Activities.

SUMMARY: FRA is updating its announcement of RSAC's working group activities to reflect their current status. For additional details on completed activities see prior working group activity notices (68 FR 25677).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Trish Butera or Lydia Leeds, RSAC Coordinators, FRA, 1120 Vermont Avenue, NW., Mailstop 25, Washington, DC 20590, (202) 493-6213 or Grady Cothen, Deputy Associate Administrator for Safety Standards and Program Development, FRA, 1120 Vermont Avenue, NW., Mailstop 25, Washington, DC 20590, (202) 493-6302.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This notice serves to update FRA's last announcement of working group activities and status reports of September 18, 2003, (68 FR 54777). The twenty-first full Committee meeting was held May 20, 2003. The twenty-second meeting is scheduled for December 2, 2003, at the Washington Plaza Hotel.

Since its first meeting in April of 1996, the RSAC has accepted eighteen tasks. Status for each of the tasks is provided below:

Open Tasks

Task 96-4—Reviewing the appropriateness of the agency's current policy regarding the applicability of existing and proposed regulations to tourist, excursion, scenic, and historic railroads. This Task was accepted on April 2, 1996, and a Working Group was established. The Working Group monitored the steam locomotive regulations task. Planned future activities involve the review of other regulations for possible adaptation to the safety needs of tourist and historic railroads. Contact: Grady Cothen (202) 493-6302.

Task 97-1—Developing crashworthiness specifications to promote the integrity of the locomotive cab in accidents resulting from collisions. This Task was accepted on June 24, 1997. A Task Force on engineering issues was established by the Working Group on Locomotive Crashworthiness to review collision history and design options and additional research was commissioned. The Working Group reviewed results of the research and is drafting performance-based standards for freight and passenger locomotives to present to the RSAC for consideration. An accident review task force has evaluated the potential effectiveness of suggested improvements. The Working Group

reached tentative agreement for a proposed rule. The NPRM and Regulatory Impact Analysis have been revised to reflect the changes. The next step is for the Working Group to complete its review of the NPRM. Contact: Charles Bielitz (202) 493-6314.

Task 97-2—Evaluating the extent to which environmental, sanitary, and other working conditions in locomotive cabs affect the crew's health and the safe operation of locomotives, proposing standards where appropriate. This Task was accepted June 24, 1997.

(Sanitation) (Completed)

(Noise exposure) The Cab Working Conditions Working Group met most recently in Chicago, November 12-14, 2002. A tentative consensus was reached on the draft rule text. The Working Group approved the NPRM. On June 27, 2003, the full RSAC gave consensus by ballot on NPRM. FRA is completing review of the Regulatory Impact Analysis. The next step is to publish the NPRM in the **Federal Register**.

(Cab Temperature) (Completed)

Note: Additional related topics may be further considered by the Working Group in the future, including effect of vibrations and crew emergency egress. Contact: Jeffrey Horn (202) 493-6283.

Task 97-3—Developing event recorder data survivability standards. This Task was accepted on June 24, 1997. On November 12, 2003, the RSAC gave consensus by ballot on the NPRM. The next step is to publish the NPRM in the **Federal Register**.

Contact: Edward Pritchard (202) 493-6247.

Task 97-4 and *Task 97-5*—Defining Positive Train Control (PTC) functionalities, describing available technologies, evaluating costs and benefits of potential systems, and considering implementation opportunities and challenges, including demonstration and deployment.

Task 97-6—Revising various regulations to address the safety implications of processor-based signal and train control technologies, including communications-based operating systems. These three tasks were accepted on September 30, 1997, and assigned to a single Working Group.

(Report to the Administrator) A Data and Implementation Task Force, formed to address issues such as assessment of costs and benefits and technical readiness, completed a report on the future of PTC systems. The report was accepted as RSAC's Report to the Administrator at the September 8, 1999,

meeting. FRA enclosed the report with a letter Report to Congress signed May 17, 2000.

(Report to Congress) The Appropriations Conferees included in their report on the FY 2003 DOT Appropriations Act a requirement for a second review of the costs and benefits of PTC as a part of the 2005 budget submission to Congress. FRA will request the RSAC to comment on the draft report when available.

(Regulatory development) The Standards Task Force, formed to develop PTC standards assisted in developing draft recommendations for performance-based standards for processor-based signal and train control systems. The NPRM was approved by consensus at the full RSAC meeting held on September 14, 2000. The NPRM was published in the **Federal Register** on August 10, 2001. A meeting of the Working Group was held December 4–6, 2001, in San Antonio, Texas to formulate recommendations for resolution of issues raised in the public comments. Agreement was reached on most issues raised in the comments. A meeting was held May 14–15, 2002, in Colorado Springs, Colorado at which the Working Group approved creation of teams to further explore issues related to the “base case” issue. Briefing of the full RSAC on the “base case” issue was completed on May 29, 2002, and consultations continued within the working group. The full Working Group met October 22–23, 2002, and again March 4–6, 2003. Resolution of the remaining issues was considered by the Working Group at the July 8–9, 2003, meeting. The Working Group achieved consensus on recommendations for resolution of a portion of the issues in the proceeding. The full Committee considered the Working Group recommendations by mail ballots scheduled for return on August 14, 2003; however, a majority of the members voting did not concur. FRA has proceeded with preparation of a final rule, which is currently being reviewed in the Executive Branch.

(Other program development activities) Task forces on Human Factors and the Axiomatic Safety—Critical Assessment Process (risk assessment) continue to work toward development of a risk assessment toolkit, and the Working Group continues to meet to monitor the implementation of PTC and related projects. Contact: Grady Cothen (202) 493–6302.

Task 00–1—Determining the need to amend regulations protecting persons who work on, under, or between rolling equipment and persons applying, removing or inspecting rear end

marking devices (Blue Signal Protection). The Working Group held its first meeting on October 16–18, 2000, and six meetings have been held since then. The Working Group significantly narrowed the issues, but did not reach full consensus on recommendations for regulation action. The status of this rulemaking will be addressed at the December 2, 2003, RSAC meeting. Contact: Doug Taylor (202) 493–6255.

Task 03–01 Passenger Safety. This Task was accepted May 20, 2003, and a Working Group was established. The Working Group held its first meeting September 9–10, 2003. At the second meeting held November 6–7, 2003, four task forces were established and specific issues were committed to each task force for resolution. Task forces are charged with reporting to the working group regarding need, practicability, and milestones with respect to each issue item.

Completed Tasks

Task 96–1—(Completed) Revising the Freight Power Brake Regulations.

Task 96–2—(Completed) Reviewing and recommending revisions to the Track Safety Standards (49 CFR Part 213).

Task 96–3—(Completed) Reviewing and recommending revisions to the Radio Standards and Procedures (49 CFR Part 220).

Task 96–5—(Completed) Reviewing and recommending revisions to Steam Locomotive Inspection Standards (49 CFR Part 230).

Task 96–6—(Completed) Reviewing and recommending revisions to miscellaneous aspects of the regulations addressing Locomotive Engineer Certification (49 CFR Part 240).

Task 96–7—(Completed) Developing Roadway Maintenance Machines (On-Track Equipment) Safety Standards.

Task 96–8—(Completed) This Planning Task evaluated the need for action responsive to recommendations contained in a report to Congress entitled, *Locomotive Crashworthiness & Working Conditions*.

Task 97–7—(Completed) Determining damages qualifying an event as a reportable train accident.

Task 01–1—(Completed) Developing conformity of FRA's regulations for accident/incident reporting (49 CFR Part 225) to revised regulations of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), U.S. Department of Labor, and to make appropriate revisions to the *FRA Guide for Preparing Accident/Incident Reports* (Reporting Guide).

Please refer to the notice published in the **Federal Register** on March 11, 1996,

(61 FR 9740) for more information about the RSAC.

Issued in Washington, DC on November 25, 2003.

George A. Gavalla,

Associate Administrator for Safety.

[FR Doc. 03–29849 Filed 11–28–03; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Innovative Grants To Support Increased Safety Belt Use Rates

AGENCY: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), Department of Transportation (DOT).

ACTION: Announcement of grants to support innovative and effective projects designed to increase safety belt use rates.

SUMMARY: NHTSA announces the fifth year of a grant program under Section 1403 of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA–21) to provide funding to States for innovative projects to increase safety belt use rates. Consistent with prior years, the goal of this program is to increase safety belt use rates across the Nation in order to reduce the deaths, injuries, and societal costs that result from motor vehicle crashes. Award of funds will be based on criteria specified in this Notice. This Notice solicits applications from the States, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, through their Governors' Representatives for Highway Safety, for funds to be made available in fiscal year (FY) 2004. Detailed application instructions are provided in the Application Procedure and the Application Contents and Grant Criteria sections of this Notice.

DATES: Applications must be received by the appropriate NHTSA Regional Office, on or before January 14, 2004.

ADDRESSES: Each State must submit its application to the appropriate NHTSA Regional Office, to the attention of the Regional Administrator, on or before January 14, 2004. Addresses of the ten Regional Offices are listed in Appendix A.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Questions relating to this grant program should be directed to Janice Hartwill-Miller, Occupant Protection Division (NTI–112), Office of Impaired Driving and Occupant Protection, NHTSA, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Room 5118, Washington, DC 20590, by e-mail at jhartwill-miller@nhtsa.dot.gov, or by phone at (202) 366–2684. For legal