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## Memorandum

Date: October 9, 2019

Subject: INFORMATION: Audit Announcement | FRA's Oversight of Conductor Certification Programs | Project No. 20S3001S000  
Federal Railroad Administration

From: Barry J. DeWeese  
Assistant Inspector General for Surface Transportation Audits 

To: Federal Railroad Administrator

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In 2012, as required by the Rail Safety Improvement Act (RSIA) of 2008, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) issued a rule for the certification of conductors<sup>1</sup> to ensure that only people who meet minimum Federal safety standards serve as conductors, reduce the rate and number of accidents and incidents, and improve railroad safety. However, conductor errors have continued to cause accidents. In February 2018, for example, an Amtrak train was diverted from the main track onto a storage track by a hand-thrown switch, and collided with a stationary CSX train near Cayce, SC. According to the National Transportation Safety Board, Amtrak's and CSX's failure to properly assess and mitigate risks associated with switching operations during a signal suspension, as well as the CSX conductor's error, caused the collision. The engineer and conductor on the Amtrak train died, and at least 92 passengers and crew members were transported for medical treatment.

We are initiating an audit to assess FRA's oversight of railroad conductor certification programs given that accidents caused by conductor error continue to occur. Additionally, in May 2019, FRA proposed revising regulations for certification of locomotive engineers to make them consistent with the conductor certification regulations.

We plan to begin the audit this month and will contact your audit liaison to schedule an entrance conference. We will conduct our work at FRA Headquarters and the FRA Regions that oversee the railroads in our

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<sup>1</sup> Freight trains in the United States generally operate with two crewmembers. The conductor is responsible for the train, freight, and crew. The engineer operates the locomotive, including application of air brakes, dynamic brakes, and any radio controlling.

sample. If you have any questions, please contact me at (202) 366-5630, or Wendy Harris, Program Director, at (202) 366-2794.

cc: DOT Audit Liaison, M-1  
FRA Audit Liaison, ROA-2