



# Memorandum

U.S. Department of  
Transportation

Office of the Secretary  
of Transportation  
Office of Inspector General

Subject: **INFORMATION**: Audit Announcement –  
FRA’s Oversight of the Transportation of  
Hazardous Materials by Rail  
Project No. 14M3008M000

Date: October 29, 2014

From: Mitchell Behm   
Assistant Inspector General  
for the Office of Surface Transportation Audits

Reply to  
Attn. of: JA-30

To: Federal Railroad Administrator

In July 2013, the fatal Bakken oil train derailment in Lac Mégantic (Quebec, Canada) highlighted the importance of oversight of hazardous materials being transported by rail. Recent increases in rail transportation of hazardous material—particularly crude oil shipments, which increased from 9,500 carloads in 2008 to 407,761 carloads in 2013—and other accidents in Alabama, North Dakota, and Virginia also underscore the importance of addressing safety risks before an accident occurs.

Due to the public safety risk posed by increases in the transportation of hazardous materials by rail, we are initiating an audit assessing the Federal Railroad Administration’s (FRA) enforcement of hazardous materials regulations using inspections and other tools.<sup>1</sup>

We plan to begin the audit this month and will coordinate with your audit liaison to schedule an entrance conference. We will conduct our work at the Department of Transportation Headquarters office and other sites as needed. If you have any questions, please contact me at 202-366-9970 or Wendy Harris, Program Director, at 202-366-2794.

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cc: FRA Audit Liaison, RAD-41  
PHMSA Audit Liaison, PH-4  
OST Audit Liaison, M-1

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<sup>1</sup> These may include emergency orders, safety advisories, warnings, waivers, and special approvals, as appropriate.