



Two-Hour Accident Notification Guide

The Federal Transit Administration’s (FTA) [State Safety Oversight \(SSO\)](#) regulation ([49 C.F.R. Part 674](#)) establishes definitions and minimum notification thresholds for safety events. Part 674 defines three types of safety events: accidents, incidents, and occurrences, and requires a rail transit agency (RTA) to notify its State Safety Oversight Agency (SSOA) and the FTA within two hours of any event classified as an accident. This Two-Hour Accident Notification Guide is designed to help RTAs identify those events that are classified as accidents and how to notify FTA.

What is an “Accident”?

“Accident” means an event that involves any of the following: a loss of life; a report of a serious injury to a person; a collision involving a rail transit vehicle; a runaway train; an evacuation for life safety reasons; or any derailment of a rail transit vehicle, at any location, at any time, whatever the cause.” 49 C.F.R. § 674.7.



What is the requirement to notify the SSO and FTA of an accident?

In addition to the requirements for accident notification set forth in an SSO program standard, an RTA must notify both the SSOA and the FTA within two hours of any accident occurring on its rail fixed guideway public transportation system. An RTA should provide accident notifications at the earliest practicable time after the occurrence of any one of the defined accidents and no later than two hours after the accident has occurred.



How do I notify FTA of an accident?

Contact the U.S. Department of Transportation Crisis Management Center (CMC) within two hours of a reportable accident, by email (recommended method) or phone:

CMC-01@dot.gov / 202-366-1863

When providing two-hour notifications, please submit accident information details as specified in your SSOA's program standard. The SSO required notifications may include, but are not limited to, a summary of the event and pertinent details such as:

- Number of fatalities
- Number of serious injuries (include type of injury if known)
- Primary and secondary event types (e.g. collision, derailment, fire, etc.)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do I classify an event that includes multiple accident types?

When an event includes multiple accident types, in your notification, please classify the accident type as the accident that occurred first.

Example 1:

If a streetcar collides with a truck and subsequently derails, the accident would be classified as a collision, because the derailment was a result of the collision.

Example 2:

If a train collides with a person and results in a fatality, the accident would be classified as a collision, because the fatality was a result of the collision.

Must I provide notification of a loss of life that results from natural causes or homicides?

You must only provide two-hour notification of loss of life (fatality) that occur on a transit property or are related to transit operations or maintenance. This requirement excludes deaths resulting from illness or other natural causes and criminal homicides that are not related to collisions with a rail transit vehicle.



Must I provide notification of a serious injury that results from natural causes or criminal assaults?

Serious injury is defined at 49 C.F.R. § 674.7 as any injury that:

1. Requires hospitalization for more than 48 hours, commencing within 7 days from the date the injury was received;
2. Results in a fracture of any bone (except simple fractures of fingers, toes, or nose);
3. Causes severe hemorrhages, nerve, muscle, or tendon damage; Involves any internal organ; or
4. Involves second- or third-degree burns, or any burns affecting more than five percent of the body surface.

You must only provide two-hour notification of serious injuries that occur on a transit property or are related to transit operations or maintenance. This requirement excludes serious injuries resulting from illness or other natural causes and criminal assaults that are not related to collisions with a rail transit vehicle.

Some injuries may be readily identified or observable at the scene of an event while other injuries may not be apparent until the person undergoes a medical examination, at which point notification may be required. FTA does not expect SSOA or RTA safety personnel to undergo medical training to determine whether an injury meets the threshold of “serious.” However, FTA does expect safety personnel to exercise a common-sense approach when evaluating injuries.

What types of collisions require two-hour notification?

You are required to provide two-hour notification of all collisions involving two or more rail transit vehicles, and all collisions involving at least one rail transit vehicle at grade crossing, with a person, or with an object that results in substantial property damage, serious injury or fatality. See Appendix A to Part 674.

What is “substantial damage”?

Substantial damage is any physical damage to transit or non-transit property including vehicles, facilities, equipment, rolling stock, or infrastructure.

Substantial damage includes damage which adversely affects the structural strength, performance, or operating characteristics of the vehicle, facility, equipment, rolling stock, or infrastructure requiring towing, rescue, onsite maintenance, or immediate removal prior to safe operation. See National Transit Database glossary.¹

¹ The NTD glossary is available at <https://www.transit.dot.gov/ntd/national-transit-database-ntd-glossary>.



Substantial damage excludes damage such as cracked windows, dented, bent or small punctured holes in the body, broken lights, mirrors, or removal from service for minor repair or maintenance, testing, or video and event recorder download.

What is a “runaway train”?

The NTD glossary defines “runaway train” as a train that is no longer under the control of a driver regardless of whether the operator is physically on the vehicle at the time. This requirement is only applicable to trains and not all rail transit vehicles.

What is an evacuation for a life safety reason?

An evacuation for a life safety reason is a condition that occurs when persons depart from transit vehicles or facilities for life safety reasons, including self-evacuation. A life safety reason may include a situation such as a fire, the presence of smoke or noxious fumes, a fuel leak, a vehicle fuel leak, an electrical hazard, a bomb threat, a suspicious item, or other hazard that constitutes a real potential danger to any person. See NTD glossary.

Do not provide Two-Hour Accident Notifications for evacuations that are not for a life safety reason such as an evacuation of a train into the right-of-way or onto adjacent track; or customer self-evacuation or transfer of passengers to rescue vehicles or alternate means of transportation due to obstructions, loss of power, mechanical breakdown and system failures, or damage.

What is a “derailment”?

A derailment is a non-collision event in which one or more wheels of a rail transit vehicle unintentionally leaves the rails. See NTD glossary.

Two-Hour Accident notification is required anytime there is the derailment of a rail transit vehicle at any location, at any time, whatever the cause.

What are the notification requirements for RTAs that are also regulated by the FRA?

Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) notifications – Anytime an RTA must notify the FRA of an accident as defined by 49 CFR Part 225.5 (i.e. shared use of the general railroad system trackage or corridors), the RTA must also notify the SSOA and FTA of the accident within the same time frame established by the FRA.