**FEDERAL RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION**

**Certification of Signal Employees  
(49 CFR Part 246)**

**SUPPORTING JUSTIFICATION**

**RIN 2130-AC92; OMB No. 2130-NEW**

Summary

* + This is a new collection of information associated with the Federal Railroad Administration’s (hereafter “FRA” or the “Agency”) Notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) titled Certification of Signal Employees.
  + FRA published this NPRM in the Federal Register on May 31, 2023. See 88 FR 35632. FRA plans to respond to any comments received in response to the NPRM in the final rule.
  + The total number of burden hours requested for this submission is 7,682 hours.
  + The total number of responses requested for this submission is 35,577.
  + This entire submission is a program change.
  + The answer to question number 12 itemizes information collection requirements.

1. **Circumstances that make collection of the information necessary.**

Pursuant to the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008 402, Pub. Law 110-432, sec. 402, 122 Stat. 4884 (Oct. 16, 2008) (hereinafter “RSIA”), the Secretary of Transportation (Secretary) was required to submit a report to Congress addressing whether certification of certain crafts or classes of employees, including signal repair and maintenance employees, was necessary to reduce the number and rate of accidents and incidents or to improve railroad safety.[[1]](#footnote-2) If the Secretary determined it was necessary to require the certification of certain crafts or classes of employees to reduce the number and rate of accidents and incidents or to improve railroad safety, section 402 of the RSIA stated the Secretary may prescribe such regulations. The Secretary delegated this authority to the Federal Railroad Administrator. 49 CFR 1.89. In response to the RSIA, the Secretary submitted a report to Congress on November 4, 2015, stating that, based on FRA’s preliminary research, dispatchers and signal employees were potentially the most viable candidate railroad crafts for certification.

FRA proposes to require railroads to develop programs for the certification of signal employees and to submit those written certification programs to FRA for approval prior to implementation. Under this proposed rule, railroads would be required to verify and document that each signal employee has the requisite knowledge, skills, safety record, and abilities to safely perform all of the safety-related signal employee duties mandated by Federal laws and regulations, prior to certification. In addition, railroads would be required to have formal processes for revoking certification (either temporarily or permanently) for signal employees who violate specified minimum requirements.

1. **How, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used.**

The proposed information collection outlined in 49 CFR part 246 would require railroads to develop programs for certifying signal employees who are responsible for the installation, testing, troubleshooting, repair, and maintenance of railroad signal systems which, for purposes of this proposed rule, include highway-rail and pathway grade crossing warning systems, unusual contingency detection devices, broken rail detection systems, power-assisted switches, and switch point indicators.

Under this proposed rule, railroads would be required to verify and document that each signal employee[[2]](#footnote-3) has the requisite knowledge, skills, safety record, and abilities to safely perform all of the safety-related signal employee duties mandated by Federal laws and regulations, prior to certification. In addition, railroads would be required to have formal processes for revoking certification (either temporarily or permanently) for signal employees who violate specified minimum requirements.

This proposed rule entails several paperwork requirements, and specific details for each requirement can be found in question 12 of this document.

1. **Extent of automated information collection.**

FRA strongly encourages the use of advanced information technology, wherever feasible, to reduce burden on respondents. Part 246 allows each railroad to maintain records electronically as long as their system meets the specified criteria to safeguard the integrity of the electronic data storage system, including the prevention of unauthorized access to the program logic and authenticity of each record. Railroads also have the option of issuing certificates electronically or in paper form. Additionally, electronic signatures by the railroads are permitted under this proposed rule.

1. **Efforts to identify duplication.**

To FRA’s knowledge, this information is not duplicated anywhere. Similar data is not available from any other source.

1. **Efforts to minimize the burden on small businesses.**

The Regulatory Flexibility Act of 1980 requires a review of proposed and final rules to assess their impact on small entities, unless the Secretary certifies that the rule would not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. “Small entity” is defined in 5 U.S.C. 601 as a small business concern that is independently owned and operated and is not dominant in its field of operation. The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) has authority to regulate issues related to small businesses, and stipulates in its size standards that a “small entity” in the railroad industry is a for profit “line-haul railroad” that has fewer than 1,500 employees, a “short line railroad” with fewer than 1,500 employees, a “commuter rail system” with annual receipts of less than $16.5 million dollars, or a contractor that performs support activities for railroads with annual receipts of less than $16.5 million.[[3]](#footnote-4)

Federal agencies may adopt their own size standards for small entities in consultation with SBA and in conjunction with public comment. Under that authority, FRA has published a proposed statement of agency policy that formally establishes “small entities” or “small businesses” as railroads, contractors, and hazardous materials shippers that meet the revenue requirements of a Class III railroad as set forth in 49 CFR 1201.1-1, which is $20 million or less in inflation-adjusted annual revenues,[[4]](#footnote-5) and commuter railroads or small Governmental jurisdictions that serve populations of 50,000 or less. *See* 68 FR 24891 (May 9, 2003) (codified at Appendix C to 49 CFR part 209). FRA is using this definition for the proposed rule.

When shaping the proposed rule, FRA considered the impact that the proposed rule would have on small entities.

The proposed rule would be applicable to all railroads with signal systems. However, some small railroads do not have a signal system as part of their operations. FRA estimates there are 744 Class III railroads, of which 704 operate on the general system. These railroads are of varying size, with some belonging to larger holding companies. Approximately 490 Class III railroads would be impacted by this rulemaking because they have a signal system. The remaining Class III railroads do not have a signal system, thus would have no need for signal employee certification program.

1. **Impact of less frequent collection of information.**

If the information were not collected, or were collected less frequently, rail safety in the United States would be seriously jeopardized. The data collected ensures that railroads and their employees fully comply with all the requirements of Part 246, including a signal employees’ certification and recertification programs, fitness requirements, initial and periodic testing of certified signal employees. For instance, without the information collected:

* Under § 246.9 pertaining to waiver requests, FRA would be unable to determine whether it is feasible, safe, and in the public interest to grant a petition for waiver concerning railroad compliance with any of the requirements of this regulation.
* Under § 246.101/103, FRA would be unable to review and approve signal employee certification program submissions to ensure that railroads have established written programs that meet part 246’s requirements.
* Under § 246.111, individuals might be certified as signal employees because railroads did not have information regarding an individual’s prior safety conduct as a motor vehicle operator.
* Under § 246.117 and § 246.118 pertaining to vision and hearing acuity, individuals might be certified as signal employees who did not have the physical capabilities to perform their assigned duties.
* Under § 246.119 and § 246.121 signal employees would not receive the essential training, and FRA would have no way to be certain that they had received knowledge testing critical to the proper and safe performance of their duties.
* Under § 246.123, FRA would have no way to ascertain whether railroads were monitoring the operational performance of signal employees.
* Under § 246.215, FRA could not be assured those railroads are properly carrying out their oversight responsibilities to conduct an annual review and analysis of their programs for responding to detected instances of poor safety conduct by their certified signal employees.
* Under § 246.301-246.307, FRA could not be assured that there would be a formalized process in place regarding the denial, suspension, and revocation of a signal employee’s certification.

Overall, this collection of information promotes and enhances national rail safety, and thus serves as a vital component of FRA’s multi-faceted rail safety program.

1. **Special circumstances.**

FRA would require each railroad that issues signal employees’ certificates to maintain a record for each applicant or certified signal employee that contains the pertinent information the railroad relied on in making its determinations. All records required to be retained must be retained for six years from the date of the railroad’s certification, recertification, denial, or revocation decision. Also, railroads are required to make these records available to FRA representatives, upon request, in a timely manner.

All other information collection requirements contained in the proposed rule are in compliance with this section.

1. **Compliance with 5 CFR 1320.8.**

FRA published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) in the Federal Register May 31, 2023, titled Certification of Signal Employees soliciting comments on the proposed rule and its accompanying information collection requirements from the regulated community, the general public, and interested parties.[[5]](#footnote-6) FRA will respond to any comments received concerning the proposed rule and its associated collection of information at the final rule stage and in the final rule Supporting Justification.

1. **Payments or gifts to respondents.**

There are no monetary payments or gifts made to respondents associated with the information collection requirements contained in this proposed regulation.

1. **Assurance of confidentiality.**

Regarding the protection of confidentiality, § 246.115(f) of the proposed regulation states the following:

Nothing in this part shall affect the responsibility of the railroad under § 219.1003(f) of this chapter to treat qualified referrals for substance abuse counseling and treatment as confidential; and the certification status of a signal employee who is successfully assisted under the procedures of that section shall not be adversely affected. However, the railroad shall include in its referral policy, as required pursuant to § 219.1003(j) of this chapter, a provision that, at least with respect to a certified signal employee or a candidate for certification, the policy of confidentiality is waived (to the extent that the railroad shall receive from the Substance Abuse Professional (SAP) or Drug and Alcohol Counselor (DAC) official notice of the substance abuse disorder and shall suspend or revoke the certification, as appropriate) if the person at any time refuses to cooperate in a recommended course of counseling or treatment.

No other assurances of confidentiality were made except for those implicit in the Privacy Act. For instance, no Privacy Impact Analysis was performed concerning Part 246; however, one has been previously performed for Part 219.

1. **Justification for any questions of a sensitive nature.**

There are no questions or information of a sensitive nature or data that would normally be considered private contained in this proposed information collection.

1. **Estimate of burden hours for information collected.**

The estimates for the respondent universe, annual responses, and average time per responses are based on the experience and expertise of FRA’s Office of Railroad Systems and Technology.

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| CFR Section | Respondent universe | Total annual responses  (A) | Average time per responses (B) | Total annual burden hours  (C) = A \* B | Wage rate (D)[[6]](#footnote-7) | Total cost equivalent  (E) = C \* D | Section analyses and estimates |
| 246.9—Waivers—Petitions | 553 railroads | 10.00 petition | 3 hours | 30.00 hour | $77.44 | $2,323.20 | A person subject to a requirement of this part may petition FRA for a waiver of compliance with such requirement. The filing of such a petition does not affect that person's responsibility for compliance with that requirement while the petition is being considered.  FRA estimates that it will take approximately three hours to complete each waiver request. |
| 246.101/.103—Certification program required and FRA review of certification program—Development of signal employee certification program in accordance with this part and procedures contained under § 246.106 (Note: Each certification program includes procedure requirements under § 246.111 through § 246.121.) | 553 railroads + ASLRRA and holding companies | 187.66 plans (14.33 Class I and commuter railroads plans + 3.33 generic program developed by ASLRRA and holding companies plans + 170 Class II and III railroad plans) | 120 hours + 120 hours + 6 hours | 3,139.20  hours | $115.24 | $361,761.41 | Each railroad subject to this part shall have a written signal employee certification program.  FRA estimates that it will take approximately 120 hours for Class I and commuter railroads, 6 hours for Class II and III railroads, and 120 hours for ASLRRA to develop each signal employee certification program and file it with FRA. |
| —(d)(1) Signal employees certification submission—Copies of the program provided to the president of each rail labor organization (RLO) that represents the railroad’s employees that are subject to this part | 553 railroads | 2 copies | 15 minutes | 0.50 hours | $77.44 | $38.72 | Each railroad that submits a program to FRA must simultaneously with its submission, provide a copy of the program and the request for approval to the president of each labor organization that represents the railroad’s signal employees and to all of the railroad’s signal employees who are subject to this part.  FRA estimates that it will take approximately 15 minutes to make each copy and serve it on the president of each labor organization. |
| —(d)(2) Affirmative statements that the railroad has provided a copy of the program to RLOs | 553 railroads | 2 affirmative statements | 15 minutes | 0.50 hours | $77.44 | $38.72 | Each railroad that submits a program to FRA must include in its submission to FRA, a statement affirming that the railroad has provided a copy of the program and the request for approval to the president of each labor organization that represents the railroad’s signal employees and to all of the railroad’s signal employees that are subject to this part, along with a list of the names and email addresses of each president of a labor organization who was provided a copy of the program.  FRA estimates that it will take approximately 15 minutes to complete each affirmative statement. |
| —(e) Comment Period—Affirmed comments on a railroad’s program by any designated representative of employees subject to this part or any directly affected employee who does not have a designated representative | 553 railroads | 31 comments | 4 hours | 124.00 hours | $77.44 | $9,602.56 | Any designated representative of signal employees subject to this part or any directly affected person who does not have a designated representative may comment on a railroad’s program.  FRA estimates that it will take approximately four hours to complete each comment. |
| —(g) Material Modifications of FRA-approved program—Railroad to submit a description of how it intends to modify the program and a copy of the modified program to FRA | The paperwork burden for this requirement is outside the scope of the 3-year PRA review period. | | | | | | |
| —(h) Resubmission—Railroad can resubmit its program or material modification as described in paragraph (f)(2) of this section after addressing all of the deficiencies noted by FRA and the resubmission must conform with the procedures and requirements contained in § 246.106 | 553 railroads + ASLRRA and holding companies | 4.67 revised plans (3.67 revised plans Class I and commuter railroads + 1 revised plan ASLRRA and holding companies) | 21 hours + 20 hours | 94.40 hours | $77.44 | $7,310.34 | If FRA disapproves a railroad’s program or material modification, as described in paragraph (f)(2) of this section, the railroad can resubmit its program or material modification after addressing all of the deficiencies noted by FRA.  FRA estimates that it will take each railroad approximately 20 hours or 21 hours to revise each program and resubmit it to FRA. |
| —(i) Rescinding Prior Approval of Program—Railroad to resubmit its certification program and the program must conform with the procedures and requirements contained in § 246.106 | The paperwork burden for this requirement is outside the scope of the 3-year PRA review period. | | | | | | |
| 246.105(c)(1)-(d)(1)—Implementation schedule for certification programs—Designation of certified signal employee | 553 railroads | 3,781 designated lists | 5 minutes | 315.08 hours | $77.44 | $24,399.80 | By (eight months after the effective date of the final rule), each railroad shall: (1) In writing, designate as certified signal employees all persons authorized by the railroad to perform the duties of a signal employee as of (the effective date of the final rule).  FRA estimates that it will take approximately 5 minutes to designate each individual as a certified signal employee. |
| —(c)(2)-(d)(2) Issue a certificate that complies with § 246.207 to each person that it designates | 553 railroads | 3,781 issued certificates | 3 minutes | 189.05 hours | $77.44 | $14,640.03 | By (eight months after the effective date of the final rule), each railroad shall: (2) Issue a certificate that complies with § 245.207 to each person that it designates.  After (eight months after the effective date of the final rule), each railroad shall: (2) Issue a certificate that complies with § 245.207 to each person that it designates.  FRA estimates that it will take approximately 3 minutes to issue a certificate card to each individual as a certified signal employee. |
| —(f) Written requests for delayed certification—Railroad may wait to recertify the person making the request until the end of the three-year period after FRA has approved the railroad’s certification program | FRA anticipates zero submissions. | | | | | | |
| —(g) Testing and evaluation—Railroad shall only certify or recertify a person as a signal employee if that person has been tested and evaluated in accordance with procedures that comply with subpart B of this part | The paperwork burden for testing and evaluation is included in the economic burden and the burden for certificates is included under § 246.105. | | | | | | |
| 246.106—Requirements for Certification Programs—Procedures for Submission and Approval of Signal Employee Certification Programs | The paperwork requirements described in this section are accounted for throughout this table. | | | | | | |
| 246.109(a)—Determinations required for certification and recertification—Eligibility requirements | The paperwork burden for this requirement is covered under § 246.111 through § 246.121 and § 246.303. | | | | | | |
| 246.111(a)-(c)—Prior safety conduct as motor vehicle operator—Eligibility requirements of this section involving prior conduct as a motor vehicle operator | 553 railroads | 1,706 motor vehicle records | 5 minutes | 142.17 hours | $77.44 | $11,009.64 | After FRA has approved a railroad’s signal employee certification program, the railroad, prior to certifying or recertifying any person as a signal employee, shall determine that the person meets the eligibility requirements of this section involving prior conduct as a motor vehicle operator.  FRA estimates that it will take approximately 5 minutes to look at the employee file/database and make the necessary determination. |
| —(e) If driver information is not obtained as required pursuant to paragraph (g) of this section, that person or the railroad certifying or recertifying that person may petition for a waiver in accordance with the provisions of part 211 of this chapter | 553 railroads | 2 waivers | 2 hours | 4.00 hours | $77.44 | $309.76 | If a person requests the information required pursuant to paragraph (g) of this section but is unable to obtain it, that person or the railroad certifying or recertifying that person may petition for a waiver of the requirements of paragraph (a) of this section in accordance with the provisions of part 211 of this chapter. A railroad shall certify or recertify a person during the pendency of the waiver request if the person otherwise meets the eligibility requirements provided in § 246.109(a)(2) through (6).  FRA estimates that it will take approximately 2 hours to complete each waiver request. |
| —(f) Individual's duty—Consent to make information concerning driving record available to that railroad | This is usual and customary procedure. The consent form is signed at the time of hiring to make driving information available to the railroad. | | | | | | |
| —(g)-(h) Request to obtain driver’s license information from licensing agency | 553 railroads | 1,706 written requests | 5 minutes | 142.17 hours | $59.00 | $8,388.03 | Each person seeking certification or recertification under this part shall request, in writing, that the chief of each driver licensing agency identified in paragraph (h) of this section provide a copy of that agency's available information concerning their driving record to the railroad that is considering such certification or recertification.  FRA estimates that it will take approximately 5 minutes to obtain information from licensing Agency. |
| —(i) Requests for additional information from licensing agency | The paperwork burden for this requirement is included under § 246.111(g)-(h). | | | | | | |
| —(j) Notification to railroad by persons of never having a license | 553 railroads | 2 notices | 10 minutes | 0.33 hours | $77.44 | $25.56 | Any person who has never obtained a motor vehicle driving license is not required to comply with the provisions of paragraph (g) of this section but shall notify the railroad of that fact in accordance with procedures established by the railroad in its certification program.  FRA estimates that it will take approximately 10 minutes to complete each notice. |
| —(k) Report of motor vehicle incidents described in paragraphs (m)(1) and (2) of this section to the employing railroad within 48 hours | 553 railroads | 40 self-reports | 10 minutes | 6.67 hours | $77.44 | $516.52 | Each certified signal employee or person seeking initial certification shall report motor vehicle incidents described in paragraphs (m)(1) and (2) of this section to the employing railroad within 48 hours of being convicted for, or completed state action to cancel, revoke, suspend, or deny a motor vehicle driver’s license for, such violations.  FRA estimates that it will take approximately 10 minutes for each employee to self-refer. |
| —(l)-(m) Evaluation of person's driving record by railroad | 553 railroads | 1,706 motor vehicle record evaluations | 5 minutes | 142.17 hours | $71.89 | $10,220.60 | When evaluating a person's motor vehicle driving record, a railroad shall not consider information concerning motor vehicle driving incidents that occurred: (1) Prior to the effective date of this rule; or (2) More than three years before the date of the railroad’s certification decision; or (3) At a time other than that specifically provided for in § 246.111, § 246.113, § 246.115, or § 246.303.  A railroad shall only consider information concerning the following types of motor vehicle incidents: (1) A conviction for, or completed State action to cancel, revoke, suspend, or deny a motor vehicle driver’s license for operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of, or impaired by, alcohol or a controlled substance; or (2) A conviction for, or completed State action to cancel, revoke, suspend, or deny a motor vehicle driver's license for refusal to undergo such testing as is required by State or foreign law when a law enforcement official seeks to determine whether a person is operating a vehicle while under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance.  FRA estimates that it will take approximately 5 minutes to conduct each motor vehicle record evaluation. |
| —(n)(1) DAC referral by railroad after report of driving drug/alcohol incident | 553 railroads | 36 DAC referrals | 5 minutes | 3.00 hours | $115.24 | $345.72 | If such an incident, described in paragraph (m) of this section, is identified: (1) The railroad shall provide the data to the railroad's DAC, together with any information concerning the person's railroad service record, and shall refer the person for evaluation to determine if the person has an active substance abuse disorder.  FRA estimates that it will take approximately 5 minutes to provide the necessary data/service record and complete each referral for evaluation. |
| —(n)(2) DAC request and supply by persons of prior counseling or treatment | 553 railroads | 1 request and supplied record | 30 minutes | 0.50 hours | $115.24 | $57.62 | If such an incident, described in paragraph (m) of this section, is identified: (2) The person shall cooperate in the evaluation and shall provide any requested records of prior counseling or treatment for review exclusively by the DAC in the context of such evaluation.  FRA estimates that it will take approximately 30 minutes for the DAC professional to make the records request and for the certification candidate to supply the necessary records. |
| —(n)(3) Conditional certifications recommended by DAC | 553 railroads | 3 conditional certification recommendations | 4 hours | 12.00 hours | $115.24 | $1,382.88 | If such an incident, described in paragraph (m) of this section, is identified: (2) The person shall cooperate in the evaluation and shall provide any requested records of prior counseling or treatment for review exclusively by the DAC in the context of such evaluation.  FRA estimates that it will take approximately 30 minutes for the DAC professional to make the records request and for the certification candidate to supply the necessary records. |
| 246.113(b)—Prior safety conduct as an employee of a different railroad—Certification candidate has not been employed by any other railroad in the previous five years, they do not have to submit a request in accordance with paragraph (d) of this section, but they must notify the railroad of this fact in accordance with procedures established by the railroad in its certification program | This is usual and customary procedure and therefore there is no paperwork burden. | | | | | | |
| —(c) Person seeking certification or recertification under this part shall submit a written request to each railroad that employed the person within the previous five years | 553 railroads | 43.00 requests | 15 minutes | 10.75 hours | $77.44 | $832.48 | Except as provided for in paragraph (b) of this section, each person seeking certification or recertification under this part shall submit a written request to each railroad that employed or certified the person within the previous five years.  FRA estimates that it will take approximately 15 minutes for each request. |
| —(e) and (g) Railroad shall provide the information requested to the railroad designated in the written request | 553 railroads | 43.00 records | 15 minutes | 10.75 hours | $77.44 | $832.48 | Within 30 days after receipt of a written request that complies with paragraph (c) of this section, a railroad provide the information requested to the railroad designated in the written request.  FRA estimates that it will take approximately 15 minutes for each request. |
| —(f) An explanation shall state why the railroad cannot provide the information within the requested time frame or cannot provide the requested information | FRA anticipates zero submissions. | | | | | | |
| 246.115(a)—Substance abuse disorders and alcohol drug rules compliance—Determination that person meets eligibility requirements | 553 railroads | 1,535 determinations | 2 minutes | 51.17 hours | $77.40 | $3,960.56 | After FRA has approved a railroad’s signal employee certification program, the railroad shall determine, prior to issuing any person a signal employee certificate, that the person meets the eligibility requirements of this section.  FRA estimates that it will take approximately two minutes to conduct the necessary evaluation and make the conditional certification recommendation. |
| —(b) Written documents from DAC that person is not affected by a disorder | 553 railroads | 79 filed documents | 30 minutes | 39.50 hours | $115.24 | $4,551.98 | In order to make the determination required under paragraph (c) of this section, a railroad shall have on file documents pertinent to that determination, including a written document from its DAC which states their professional opinion that the person has been evaluated as not currently affected by a substance abuse disorder or that the person has been evaluated as affected by an active substance abuse disorder.  FRA estimates that it will take approximately 30 minutes to file the required document. |
| —(c)(3) Fitness requirement—Voluntarily self-referral by signal employee for substance abuse counseling or treatment under the policy required by § 219.1003 of this chapter | 553 railroads | 2 self-referrals | 10 minutes | 0.33 hours | $115.24 | $38.03 | In the case of a current employee of a railroad evaluated as having an active substance abuse disorder (including a person identified under the procedures of § 246.111), the employee may, if otherwise eligible, voluntarily self-refer for substance abuse counseling or treatment under the policy required by § 219.1001(b)(1) of this chapter; and the railroad shall then treat the substance abuse evaluation as confidential except with respect to ineligibility for certification.  FRA estimates that it will take approximately 10 minutes for each employee to self-refer. |
| —(d)(1)-(d)(2) Prior alcohol/drug conduct; Federal rule compliance | 553 railroads | 1,535 certification reviews | 10 minutes | 255.83 hours | $115.24 | $29,481.85 | A review of certification shall be initiated promptly upon the occurrence and documentation of any incident of conduct described in this paragraph.  FRA estimates that it will take approximately 10 minutes to conduct each certification review. |
| —(d)(3)(i) Written determination that most recent incident has occurred | 553 railroads | 30 written determinations | 1 hour | 30.00 hours | $115.24 | $3,457.20 | A period of ineligibility described in this section shall begin: (i) For a person not currently certified, on the date of the railroad's written determination that the most recent incident has occurred.  FRA estimates that it will take about one hour to complete each written determination. |
| —(d)(3)(ii) Notification to person that recertification has been denied | 553 railroads | 30 notifications | 30 minutes | 15.00 hours | $77.44 | $1,161.60 | A period of ineligibility described in this section shall begin: (ii) For a person currently certified, on the date of the railroad's notification to the person that recertification has been denied or certification has been suspended.  FRA estimates that it will take approximately 30 minutes to complete each notification. |
| —(d)(4) Persons/conductors waiving investigation/de-certifications | 553 railroads | 20 waived investigations | 10 minutes | 3.33 hours | $77.44 | $257.88 | In the case of one violation of § 219.102 of this chapter, the person shall be ineligible to hold a certificate during evaluation and any required primary treatment as described in paragraph (e) of this section.  FRA estimates that it will take approximately 10 minutes for each signal employee to waive investigation. |
| 246.117(a)-(c)—Vision acuity—Determination vision standards met—Medical examiner certificate/record | 553 railroads | 400 records | 2 minutes | 13.33 hours | $71.89 | $958.29 | Any examination required under this section shall be performed by or under the supervision of a medical examiner or a licensed physician’s assistant.  FRA estimates that it will take 2 minutes to complete each record. |
| —(d)(1) Request for retest and another medical evaluation—Medical examiner certificate/record | 553 railroads | 10 records | 2 minutes | 0.33 hours | $71.89 | $23.72 | In accordance with the guidance prescribed in Appendix B to this part, a person is entitled to: (i) One retest without making any showing; and (ii) An additional retest if the person provides evidence that circumstances have changed since the last test to the extent that the person may now be able to safely perform as a signal employee.  FRA estimates that it will take 2 minutes complete each record. |
| —(d)(2) Railroad to provide a copy of this part to medical examiner | 553 railroads | 400 copies | 5 minutes | 33.33 hours | $71.89 | $2,396.09 | The railroad shall provide its medical examiner with a copy of this part, including all appendices.  FRA estimates that it will take 5 minutes to complete each copy. |
| —(d)(3) Consultations by medical examiners with railroad officer and issue of conditional certification | 553 railroads | 5 consultations + 5 conditional certifications | 30 minutes + 10 minutes | 3.33 hours | $71.89 | $239.39 | If, after consultation with a railroad officer, the medical examiner concludes that, despite not meeting the threshold(s) in paragraph (c) of this section, the person has the ability to safely perform as a signal employee, the railroad may conclude that the person satisfies the vision acuity requirements of this section to be a certified signal employee. Such certification will be conditioned on any special restrictions the medical examiner determines in writing to be necessary.  FRA estimates that it will take about 30 minutes to complete each consultation and about 10 minutes to complete each conditional certification. |
| —(g) Notification by certified signal employee of deterioration of vision | 553 railroads | 1 notification | 10 minutes | 0.17 hours | $71.89 | $12.22 | When a certified signal employee becomes aware that their vision has deteriorated, they shall notify the railroad’s medical department or other appropriate railroad official of the deterioration. Such notification must occur prior to performing any subsequent service as a signal employee. The individual cannot return to service as a signal employee until they are reexamined and determined by the railroad’s medical examiner to satisfy the vision acuity standards prescribed in this section and Appendix B to this part.  FRA estimates that it will take about 10 minutes to complete each notification. |
| 246.118—Hearing acuity—Determination hearing standards met—Medical records | 553 railroads | 400 medical records | 2 minutes | 13.33 hours | $71.89 | $958.29 | After FRA has approved a railroad’s signal employee certification program, the railroad shall determine, prior to issuing any person a signal employee certificate, that the person meets the standards for visual acuity prescribed in this section and Appendix B to this part.  Any examination required under this section shall be performed by or under the supervision of a medical examiner or a licensed physician’s assistant.  FRA estimates that it will take 2 minutes to complete each record. |
| —(d)(1) Request for retest and another medical evaluation—Medical examiner certificate/record | 553 railroads | 10 records | 2 minutes | 0.33 hours | $71.89 | $23.72 | In accordance with the guidance prescribed in Appendix B to this part, a person is entitled to: (i) One retest without making any showing; and (ii) An additional retest if the person provides evidence that circumstances have changed since the last test to the extent that the person may now be able to safely perform as a signal employee.  FRA estimates that it will take 2 minutes complete each record. |
| —(d)(2) Railroad to provide a copy of this part to medical examiner | 553 railroads | 400 copies | 5 minutes | 33.33 hours | $71.89 | $2,396.09 | The railroad shall provide its medical examiner with a copy of this part, including all appendices.  FRA estimates that it will take 5 minutes to complete each copy. |
| —(d)(3) Consultations by medical examiners with railroad officer and issue of conditional certification | 553 railroads | 5 consultations + 5 conditional certifications | 30 minutes + 10 minutes | 3.33 hours | $71.89 | $239.39 | If, after consultation with a railroad officer, the medical examiner concludes that, despite not meeting the threshold(s) in paragraph (c) of this section, the person has the ability to safely perform as a signal employee, the railroad may conclude that the person satisfies the vision acuity requirements of this section to be a certified signal employee. Such certification will be conditioned on any special restrictions the medical examiner determines in writing to be necessary.  FRA estimates that it will take about 30 minutes to complete each consultation and about 10 minutes to complete each conditional certification. |
| —(g) Notification by certified signal employee of deterioration of hearing | 553 railroads | 25 notifications | 10 minutes | 4.17 hours | $71.89 | $299.78 | If, after consultation with a railroad officer, the medical examiner concludes that, despite not meeting the threshold(s) in paragraph (c) of this section, the person has the ability to safely perform as a signal employee, the railroad may conclude that the person satisfies the vision acuity requirements of this section to be a certified signal employee. Such certification will be conditioned on any special restrictions the medical examiner determines in writing to be necessary.  FRA estimates that it will take about 30 minutes to complete each consultation and about 10 minutes to complete each conditional certification. |
| 246.119(b)-(c)—Training requirements—A railroad’s election for the training of signal employees shall be stated in its certification program | The paperwork burden for this requirement is covered under § 246.101/.103. | | | | | | |
| —(d) Initial training program for previously untrained person to be a signal employee | 553 railroads | 184 training programs | 3 hours | 553.00 hours | $115.24 | $63,727.72 | A railroad that elects to train persons not previously certified as signal employees shall develop an initial training program.  FRA estimates that it will take 3 hours to develop each training program. |
| —(d)(3) Modification to training program when new safety-related railroad laws, regulations and etc. are introduced into the workplace | The paperwork burden for this requirement is outside the scope of the 3-year PRA review period. | | | | | | |
| —(e) Relevant information or materials on safety or other rules made available to certification candidates | The paperwork burden for this requirement is covered under § 246.101/.103. | | | | | | |
| —(f) and (g) Completion of initial training program by a person being certified as a signal employee—Written documentation showing completed training program that complies with paragraph (d) of this section | 553 railroads | 3,781 written documents or records | 10 minutes | 630.17 hours | $77.44 | $48,800.36 | A railroad shall have written documentation showing that: (1) The person completed a training program that complies with paragraph (d) of this section (if the person has not previously been certified as a signal employee); and (2) The person demonstrated their knowledge by achieving a passing grade under the testing, practical demonstration, and evaluation procedures of the training program.  FRA estimates that it will take 10 minutes to complete each record. |
| —(f)(3) Employee consultation with qualified supervisory employee if given written test to fulfill this requirement, the railroad must provide the certification candidate with an opportunity to consult with a qualified instructor to explain a question | The paperwork burden for this requirement is covered under § 246.119. | | | | | | |
| —(h) Certification program is submitted in accordance with the procedures and requirements described in § 246.106 | The paperwork burden for this requirement is covered under § 246.101/.103. | | | | | | |
| —(i) Familiarization training for signal employee of acquiring railroad from selling company/railroad prior to commencement of new operation | FRA anticipates zero submissions. | | | | | | |
| —(j) Continuing education of certified signal employees | 553 railroads | 2,000 training records | 15 minutes | 500.00 hours | $71.89 | $35,945.00 | Each railroad shall provide for the continuing education of its certified signal employees to ensure that each certified signal employee maintains the necessary knowledge and skills concerning: (1) Compliance with all applicable Federal laws, regulations, and orders; (2) Compliance with all applicable railroad signal system safety and operating rules; and (3) Compliance with all applicable standards, procedures, and instructions for the installation, operation, testing, maintenance, troubleshooting, and repair of new and existing signal systems (including new and existing software and equipment) and new and existing signal-related technology deployed on the railroad.  FRA estimates that it will take 15 minutes to complete each record. |
| 246.120—Requirements for qualification —Determining eligibility and | The paperwork burden for this requirement is covered under § 246.119. | | | | | | |
| —(b) Notification by persons not qualified on the signal system | The paperwork burden for this requirement is covered under § 246.119. | | | | | | |
| 246.121(a)-(c)—Knowledge testing—Determining eligibility | 553 railroads | 2,000 test records | 5 minutes | 166.67 hours | $77.44 | $12,906.92 | After FRA has approved a railroad’s signal employee certification program, the railroad shall determine, prior to issuing any person a signal employee certificate, that the person has demonstrated sufficient knowledge of the railroad’s signal standards, test procedures, and instructions for the installation, operation, testing, maintenance, troubleshooting, and repair of the railroad’s signal systems.  FRA estimates that it will take about 5 minutes to complete each record. |
| —(d) Reexamination of the failed test | 553 railroads | 20 examination records | 5 minutes | 1.67 hours | $77.44 | $129.32 | If a person fails the test, no railroad shall permit or require that person to work as a certified signal employee prior to that person’s achieving a passing score during a reexamination of the test.  FRA estimates that it will take about 5 minutes to complete each record. |
| 246.123(c)—Monitoring operational performance—Unannounced compliance tests—Retention of a written record | 553 railroads | 7,348 records | 2 minutes | 244.93 hours | $77.44 | $18,967.38 | If the railroad elects to classify its certified signal employees into more than one occupational category or subcategory pursuant to § 246.107, the railroad shall address in its certification program how mentoring will be provided for certified signal employees who move into a different occupational category or subcategory of certified signal service.  FRA estimates that it will take about 2 minutes to complete each record. |
| 246.125—Certification determinations made by other railroads | 553 railroads | 11.00 determinations | 30 minutes | 5.50 hours | $77.44 | $425.92 | A railroad that is considering certification of a person as a signal employee may rely on certain determinations made by another railroad concerning that person's certification.  FRA estimates that it will take about 30 minutes to complete each determination. |
| 246.203(b)—Retaining information supporting determination—Records | 553 railroads | 2,000 record retentions | 15 minutes | 500.00 hours | $77.44 | $38,720.00 | After FRA approves a railroad’s signal employee certification program, any time the railroad issues, denies, or revokes a certificate after making the determinations required under § 246.109, it shall maintain a record for each certified signal employee and certification candidate. Each record shall contain the information, described in paragraph (b) of this section, that the railroad relied on in making the determinations required under § 246.109.  FRA estimates that it will take about 15 minutes to retain each record. |
| —(g) Amended electronic records | 553 railroads | 2 amended record | 15 minutes | 0.50 hours | $77.44 | $38.72 | Any amendment to a record is either: (i) Electronically stored apart from the record that it amends; or (ii) Electronically attached to the record as information without changing the original record.  Each amendment to a record uniquely identifies the person making the amendment  FRA estimates that it will take 15 minutes to amend an electronic record. |
| 246.205—List of certified signal employees and recordkeeping. | The paperwork requirement for this burden is covered under § 246.105(c)(1)-(d)(1). | | | | | | |
| 246.207(a)-(f)—Certificate requirements | The paperwork requirement for this burden is covered under § 246.105(c)(2)-(d)(2). | | | | | | |
| —(b) Notification by signal employees that railroad request to serve exceeds certification | 553 railroads | 110 notifications | 30 seconds | .92 hours | $71.89 | $66.14 | A certificate does not need to include an expiration date, as required under paragraph (a)(6) of this section, if the person was designated as a certified signal employee under § 246.105(c) or (d).  FRA estimates that it will take 30 seconds to notify the signal employee. |
| —(g)-(h) Replacement of certificates | 553 railroads | 45 replacement certificates | 5 minutes | 3.75 hour | $77.44 | $290.40 | If a signal employee’s certificate is lost, stolen, mutilated, or becomes unreadable, the railroad shall promptly replace the certificate at no cost to the signal employee.  FRA estimates that it will take 5 minutes to replace each certificate. |
| 246.213(a)-(h)—Multiple Certificates—Notification of denial of certification by individuals holding multiple certifications | 553 railroads | 3 notifications | 10 minutes | .50 hour | $77.44 | $38.72 | A person who holds a current signal employee certificate from more than one railroad shall immediately notify their employer(s) and all railroad(s) with whom they hold a signal employee certificate if they are denied signal employee certification or recertification under § 246.301 by a railroad or have their signal employee certification suspended or revoked under § 246.307 by a railroad.  FRA estimates that it will take 10 minutes for each notification. |
| —(i) In lieu of issuing multiple certificates, a railroad may issue one certificate to a person who is certified in multiple crafts | The paperwork requirement for this burden is covered under § 246.105. | | | | | | |
| 246.215—Railroad oversight responsibility—Review and analysis of administration of certification program | 553 railroads | 17.33 annual reviews and analyses | 8 hours | 138.64 hours | $115.24 | $15,976.87 | No later than March 31 of each year (beginning in calendar year [YEAR THAT IS 3 YEARS AFTER EFFECTIVE DATE OF FINAL RULE]), each Class I railroad (including the National Railroad Passenger Corporation), each railroad providing commuter service, and each Class II railroad shall conduct a formal annual review and analysis concerning the administration of its program for responding to detected instances of poor safety conduct by certified signal employees during the prior calendar year.  FRA estimates that it will take approximately 8 hours to conduct a formal annual review and analysis. |
| —(d) Report of findings and conclusions reached during annual review by railroad to FRA (if requested in writing by FRA) review and analysis effort | 553 railroads | 2 reports | 4 hours | 8.00 hours | $115.24 | $921.92 | If requested in writing by FRA, the railroad shall provide a report of the findings and conclusions reached during such annual review and analysis effort.  FRA estimates that it will take approximately 4 hours to complete each report. |
| 246.301(a)—Denial of certification—Notification to candidate of information that and candidate response forms basis for denying certification | 553 railroads | 6 notices + 3 responses | 1 hour | 9.00 hours | $77.44 | $696.96 | A railroad shall notify a candidate for certification or recertification of information known to the railroad that forms the basis for denying the person certification and provide the person a reasonable opportunity to explain or rebut that adverse information in writing prior to denying certification. A railroad shall provide the signal employee candidate with any documents or records, including written statements, related to failure to meet a requirement of this part that support its pending denial decision.  FRA estimates that it will take about one hour to complete each notification letter and about one hour to complete each rebuttal response. |
| —(b) Denial Decision Requirements—Written notification of denial of certification by railroad to candidate | 553 railroads | 6 notifications | 1 hour | 6.00 hours | $77.44 | $464.64 | If a railroad denies a person certification or recertification, it shall issue a decision that complies with all of the following requirements: (1) It must be in writing; (2) It must explain the basis for the railroad’s denial decision; (3) It must address any explanation or rebuttal information that the certification candidate provides pursuant to paragraph (a) of this section; (4) It must include the date of the railroad’s decision; and (5) It must be served on the candidate no later than 10 days after the railroad’s decision.  FRA estimates that it will take one hour to complete each notification. |
| 246.307(b)(1)-(b)(4)—Process for revoking certification—Immediate suspension of signal employee’s certification | 553 railroads | 15 suspended certification letters and documentations | 30 minutes | 7.50 hours | $77.44 | $580.80 | Prior to or upon suspending the signal employee’s certification, the railroad shall provide the signal employee with notice of: the reason for the suspension; the pending revocation; and an opportunity for a hearing before a presiding officer other than the investigating officer. This notice may initially be given either verbally or in writing. If given verbally, the notice must be subsequently confirmed in writing in a manner that conforms with the notification provisions of the applicable collective bargaining agreement. If there is no applicable collective bargaining agreement notification provision, the written notice must be made within four days of the date the certification was suspended.  FRA estimates that it will take 30 minutes to complete each letter or documentation. |
| —(b)(5)-(b)(6) Determinations based on the record of the hearing, whether revocation of the certification is warranted | The paperwork requirement for this burden is covered under § 246.307(e). | | | | | | |
| —(b)(7) Retention of record of the hearing for three years after the date the decision is rendered | 553 railroads | 15 records | 15 minutes | 3.75 hours | $77.44 | $290.40 | The railroad shall retain the record of the hearing for three years after the date the decision is rendered.  FRA estimates that it will take 15 minutes to retain each record. |
| —(d)(9) Hearing Procedures— Written waiver of right to hearing | 553 railroads | 3 written waivers | 10 minutes | 0.50 hours | $59.00 | $29.50 | A person may waive their right to a hearing. That waiver shall: (i) Be in writing; (ii) Reflect the fact that the person has knowledge and understanding of these rights and voluntarily surrenders them; and (iii) Be signed by the person making the waiver.  FRA estimates that it will take 10 minutes to complete each waiver. |
| —(e) Revocation Decision Requirements—Written decisions by railroad official | 553 railroads | 15 written decisions and service of decisions | 2 hours | 30.00 hours | $115.24 | $3,457.20 | No later than 10 days after the close of the record, a railroad official, other than the investigating officer, shall prepare and sign a written decision as to whether the railroad is revoking the signal employee’s certification.  FRA estimates that it will take 2 hours to complete a written decision. |
| —(g) Revocation of certification based on information that another railroad has done so | 553 railroads | 3 revoked certifications | 10 minutes | .50 hours | $115.24 | $57.62 | A railroad shall revoke a signal employee’s certification if, during the period that certification is valid, the railroad acquires information which convinces it that another railroad has revoked the person’s signal employee certification in accordance with the provisions of this section. Such revocation shall end on the same date that the revocation period ends for the railroad that initially revoked the person’s certification. The requirement to provide a hearing under this section is satisfied when any single railroad holds a hearing. No additional hearing is required prior to a revocation by more than one railroad arising from the same facts.  FRA estimates that it will take 10 minutes to revoke a certificate. |
| —(j) Placing relevant information in record if sufficient evidence meeting the criteria in paragraph (h) or (i) of this section becomes available | The paperwork requirement for this burden is covered under § 246.307(b)(7). | | | | | | |
| —(k) Good faith determination | 553 railroads | 3 good faith determinations | 1 hour | 3.00 hour | $77.44 | $232.32 | If a railroad makes a good faith determination, after performing a reasonable inquiry, that the course of conduct provided for in paragraph (h) or (i) of this section is warranted, the railroad will not be in violation of paragraph (b)(1) of this section if it decides not to suspend the signal employee’s certification.  FRA estimates that it will take one hour for each good faith determination. |
| Subpart E—Dispute Resolution Procedures—§ 246.401 through § 246.411 | The requirements under these provisions are exempted from the PRA under 5 CFR 1320.4(a)(2). Since these provisions pertain to an administrative action or investigation, there is no PRA burden associated with these requirements. | | | | | | |
| Appendix A to Part 246 – Procedures for Obtaining and Evaluating Motor Vehicle Driving Record Data | The paperwork requirements described in this appendix are accounted for throughout this table. | | | | | | |
| Appendix B to Part 246 – Medical Standards Guidelines | The paperwork requirements described in this appendix are accounted for throughout this table. | | | | | | |
| Totals[[7]](#footnote-8) | 553 railroads + ASLRRA and holding companies | 35,577 responses | N/A | 7,682  hours | N/A | $747,257 |  |

1. **Estimate of total annual costs to respondents**.

There are additional costs to respondents in addition to those in question number 12 above. Thus, the cost for certification cards for certified signal employees is $8,233.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Year | Number of employees | Cost per card ($) | Annual Cost ($) |
| 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 2,996 | 4.12 | 12,349 |
| 3 | 2,996 | 4.12 | 12,349 |
| Total | 5,992 | N/A | 24,698 |
| Annualized | 1,997 | N/A | 8,233 |

1. **Estimate of Cost to Federal Government**.

FRA estimates that approximately two people (at the GS-14 step 5 level and GS-15 step 5 level; 2020 OPM Pay Schedule for the locality pay area of Washington-Baltimore-Arlington, DC-MD-VA-WV-PA) will review all the documentation associated with the requirements of Part 246.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Staff | Hourly Wage Rate ($) | Burdened Wage Rate Time 75% Overhead Cost ($) | Government Cost ($)  Years 1 through 3 |
| Railroad Safety Specialist (GS-14) | 65.88 | 115.29 | 481,219 |
| Attorney (GS-14) | 65.88 | 115.29 | 13,835 |
| Attorney (GS-15) | 77.49 | 135.61 | 32,546 |
| Total | N/A | N/A | 527,599 |
| Annual cost | N/A | N/A | 175,866 |

1. **Explanation of program changes and adjustments**.

This is a new collection of information associated with FRA’s new 49 CFR part 246 proposed rule. The total burden requested for this submission amounts to 7,682 hours, and the total number of responses requested is 35,577. The entire requested burden is a program change.

1. **Publication of results of data collection.**

There are no plans for publication regarding this information collection.

The information to be collected is used by specialists and field personnel to enforce the regulation. The information collected may be incorporated into the FRA database, where relevant and appropriate, and provided to the public and other interested parties who wish to access the information on the FRA Website.

1. **Approval for not displaying the expiration date for OMB approval.**

FRA is not seeking approval to not display the expiration date.

1. **Exception to certification statement.**

No exceptions are taken at this time.

1. *See also* 49 U.S.C. 20103 (providing FRA’s general authority to “prescribe regulations and issue orders for every area of railroad safety”). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. 1 Although “signal employees” are also referred to as “signalmen,” those terms are synonymous. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. U.S. Small Business Administration, “Table of Small Business Size Standards Matched to North American Industry Classification System Codes, August 19, 2019. <https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/2019-08/SBA%20Table%20of%20Size%20Standards_Effective%20Aug%2019,%202019.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. The Class III railroad revenue threshold is $40.4 million or less, for 2021. (The Class II railroad threshold is between $40.4 million and $900 million.) *See* Surface Transportation Board (STB), available at <https://www.stb.gov/news-communications/latest-news/pr-21-16/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. 88 FR 35632. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Throughout the tables in this document, the dollar equivalent cost is derived from the 2020 Surface Transportation Board’s Full Year Wage A&B data series using the appropriate employee group hourly wage rate that includes 75-percent overhead charges. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Totals may not add due to rounding throughout this document. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)