

FEDERAL RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION
Remotely Controlled Railroad Switch Operations
(Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations Part 218)
SUPPORTING JUSTIFICATION—Part A
OMB Control No. 2130-0516

Summary of Submission

- This submission is a request for an extension without change (with changes in estimates) of the last three-year approval granted by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) on April 28, 2023, with an expiration date on April 30, 2026.
- The Federal Railroad Administration (hereafter “FRA” or “the Agency”) published a required 60-day Notice in the *Federal Register* on January 30, 2026. *See* 91 FR 4164. FRA received no comments in response to this Notice.
- Overall, the adjusted estimates for this information collection request (ICR) decreased the burden by 1 hour and decreased the responses by 75.
- The answer to question number 12 itemizes all information collection requirements.

1. Circumstances that make collection of the information necessary.

On October 16, 1970, Congress enacted the Federal Railroad Safety Act of 1970.¹ This Act gave the Secretary of Transportation (Secretary) the authority to prescribe, as necessary, appropriate rules, regulations, orders, and standards for all areas of railroad safety. The Secretary delegated rulemaking responsibility under section 20103 to the FRA Administrator, 49 CFR § 1.89(a).

Pursuant to its general statutory rulemaking authority, FRA promulgates and enforces rules as part of a comprehensive regulatory program to address all areas of railroad safety. In the areas of blue signal protection of workers and protection of occupied camp cars, FRA issued regulations under Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) part 218, §§ 218.30² and 218.77³.

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

FRA uses the information collected under 49 CFR part 218 to require that remotely controlled switches are lined properly to protect workers as they inspect, or service rolling equipment or occupied camp cars on track.

¹ 49 U.S.C. § 20103.

² 44 FR 2175, Jan. 10, 1979, as amended at 48 FR 6123, Feb. 10, 1983.

³ 44 FR 2175, Jan. 10, 1979.

Sections 218.30 and 218.77 require operators of the remotely controlled switch to remove the locking device controlling the switch only once they have been informed by the person in charge of the workers that it is safe to do so. The operators are required to maintain a record of each protection request for 15 days. Operators of remotely controlled switches use the information as a record documenting protection of workers or camp cars. This record also serves as a valuable resource for railroad supervisors and FRA and State inspectors monitoring regulatory compliance.

3. Extent of automated information collection.

FRA strongly encourages the use of advanced information technology, wherever feasible, to reduce the burden on respondents. For the notification record required under § 218.77, FRA provides railroads with the option to keep hard copy or electronic records. FRA estimates that 99 percent of responses are kept electronically.

4. Efforts to identify duplication.

To our knowledge, the information collection requirements are not duplicated elsewhere. Similar data are not available from any other source.

5. Efforts to minimize the burden on small businesses.

The number of railroads affected by this collection of information is a small fraction of the total number of small railroads in operation today. Though the respondent burden varies with the complexity of rail operations, larger railroads will mostly be impacted. Small railroads with limited operations have no recordkeeping burden.

6. Impact of less frequent collection of information.

If this information were not collected or were collected less frequently, rail safety in the U.S. would be jeopardized. Specifically, without this collection of information, railroad track crews might not be provided necessary protection while performing their jobs or while occupying camp cars. Railroad workers are vulnerable to being struck by moving cars as they inspect or service equipment on a particular track or as they rest in camp cars. Production of written records of notification enhances attention to safety requirements by minimizing mental lapses by personnel handling several operations simultaneously.

In sum, this collection of information aids FRA's comprehensive safety program and serves to promote safe rail travel and the safe operation of trains for both the traveling public and railroad workers. Thus, it helps FRA to fulfill its primary mission.

7. **Special circumstances.**

There are no special circumstances with respect to this information collection.

8. **Compliance with 5 CFR § 1320.8.**

As required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA) and 5 CFR 1320, FRA published a notice in the *Federal Register* on January 30, 2026⁴, soliciting comment from the public, railroads, and other interested parties.

Consultations with representatives of the affected population:

As a part of FRA's oversight and enforcement, individuals from the railroad industry are generally in direct contact with FRA's inspectors at the time of site inspections and can provide any comments or concerns to them.

9. **Payments or gifts to respondents.**

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

10. **Assurance of confidentiality.**

The information collected is not of a confidential nature and FRA pledges no confidentiality.

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

This information collection does not contain any data of a personal or sensitive nature.

⁴ 91 FR 4164.

12. Estimate of burden hours for information collected.

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

Section	Respondent universe	Total Annual Responses (A)	Average Time per Response (B)	Total Annual Burden Hours (C = A * B)	Wage Rates ⁵	Total Cost Equivalent U.S.D (D = C * wage rates)	PRA Analysis
218.30 Remotely controlled switches (Subpart B, Blue signal Protection of Workers)							
—(c) Blue signal protection of workers	53 railroads	1,837,775 notifications (53 railroads x 95 responses per day x 365 days per year)	45 seconds	22,972 hours	\$72.12	\$1,656,740.64	Operators are required to maintain for 15 days a written record of each notification which contains the following information: (1) The name and craft of the employee in charge who provided the notification; (2) The number or other designation of the track involved; (3) The date and time the operator notified the employee in charge that protection had been provided in accordance with paragraph (a) of this section; and (4) The date and time the operator was informed that the work had been completed, and the name and craft of the employee in charge who provided this information.

⁵ Surface Transportation Board (STB), *Quarterly Wage Form A&B Data* (2024). Compiled from Class I railroad data reported on Wage Form A&B for year 2024. Calculated as: Wage (\$/hour) = sum of *compensation for time worked and paid for straight time rates* (\$) for Class I railroads ÷ sum of *service hours for time worked and paid for straight time rates* (hours) for Class I railroads. Available: <https://www.stb.gov/reports-data/economic-data/quarterly-wage-ab-data/>. Employee Group 300, Maintenance of Way & Structures hourly wage rate of \$41.21 and an additional 1.75 for overheads costs was used to calculate the fully burdened wage rate. (41.21 x 1.75 = 72.12).

218.77 Remotely Controlled Switches (Subpart E, Protection of occupied camp cars)

—(c) Protection of occupied camp cars	6 railroads	75 notifications	45 seconds	1 hours	\$72.12	\$71.12	Operators are required to maintain for 15 days a written record of each notification which contains the following information: (1) The name and craft of the employee in charge who provided the notification; (2) The number or other designation of the track involved; (3) The date and time the operator notified the employee in charge that protection had been provided in accordance with paragraph (a) of this section; and (4) The date and time the operator was informed that the work had been completed, and the name and craft of the employee in charge who provided this information.
Total	53 railroads	1,837,850 responses		22,973 hours		\$1,656,811.76	

13. Estimate of total annual costs to respondents.

There are no additional costs to respondents outside of labor costs.

14. Estimate of cost to Federal Government.

There is no cost to the Federal Government in connection with these recordkeeping requirements. FRA inspectors will examine the required records as necessary in the course of their normal enforcement duties as well as during investigations of accidents/incidents.

15. Explanation of program changes and adjustments.

This is an extension without change (with changes in estimates) of a previously approved collection of information. The current OMB inventory for this information collection reflects annual total burden of 22,974 hours and 1,837,925 responses, while the requesting inventory estimates a total annual burden of 22,973 hours and 1,837,850 responses. FRA made an adjustment under § 218.77 which covers the protection of occupied camp cars. The number of notifications annually has been reduced from 150 to 75, to better reflect the infrequent usage of these types of cars. All other requirements in this information collection remained the same.

16. Publication of results of data collection.

FRA does not plan to publish the information collected.

17. Approval for not displaying the expiration date for OMB approval.

FRA will be displaying the expiration date.

18. Exception to certification statement.

No exceptions are taken at this time.