

Sounder Accident/Incident Reporting

Report #: 2024-10

Executive Summary

Internal Safety Audits are required to be completed annually to ensure Sound Transit and our contracted partners are compliant to Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) rule 49 CFR 225 for reporting accidents and incidents.

Audit Objective

Our audit focused on reviewing safety controls, processes, and procedures to ensure accidents and incident reporting procedures are documented according to the 225 rule and any self-imposed requirements.

Audit criteria included reviewing processes and programs captured by:

- Sounder Commuter Rail’s Internal Control Plan (ICP)
- Transportation Safety & Security (TSS) Division SOPs for reporting accidents and incidents
- Sounder Commuter Rail SOPs for accident reporting
- Records of submitted reports to the FRA.

This audit focusing on FRA reports that have been submitted for CY 2023 - 2024. The audit teams’ intent was to limit interviews with staff and pose no disruption to daily operations while accomplishing our audit.

Conclusion

From our audit, we identified no **(0) findings** of non-compliance and have **one (1) observation**; listed below and discussed in more detail beginning on page 6 of this report.

Summary of results:

Ref #	Title of Issue	Risk Rating
O.1	The Sounder Incident Control Plan (ICP) does not provide guidance on reviewing the report before submission to the FRA.	N/A

Background

Federal requirements for Sounder Commuter Rail service

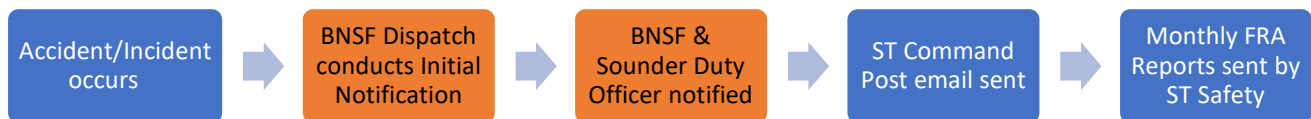
FRA rule 49 CFR 225.33(9) requires that each railroad provide a statement in their Internal Control Plan (ICP) to describe the audit process and how frequently they are completed (not less than once per calendar year). This regulation requires Sound Transit, as the railroad owner, to conduct annual internal audits of the Sounder Commuter Rail's Accident and Incident reporting process.

Accident / Incident Reporting process

Internal safety audits occur to ensure the agency independently evaluates compliance with federal, and local requirements for incident reporting; identify hazardous and risk conditions and verify that the agency is fully implementing its safety program as described in our plans and procedures.

All internal safety audits are resourced on a three-year audit plan that is communicated agency-wide. Results of all annual audits are documented in an annual report that is presented to the Finance & Audit Committee (FAC) and distributed to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). The annual report is also distributed to agency leadership and management, as required.

The flow chart below represents the reporting process from the time of an accident or incident until the monthly reports are submitted:



Methods of evaluation and verification

To assess compliance during the audit, the auditors completed the following steps:

- *Interviewed operations and maintenance staff to verify their understanding of safety processes.*
- *Compared agency safety program-related procedures and plans against federal requirements.*
- *Sampled and reviewed records.*

Audit Standards

We conducted our internal safety audit according to Audit Division policies & procedures, which are governed by our Audit Charter; and meets several sets of applicable federal, state, and local auditing standards.

These standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our objectives. We believe that the evidence we obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Also, the Audit Division is committed to following safety oversight standards set forth by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), and all other relevant auditing requirements or standards.

Audit Results

The following table summarizes of our findings and observations. This final report reflects the current state of accident and incident practices and processes at Sound Transit during the audit period.

Audit Phases

Our audits are risk-based and focus on the areas with the highest potential risk impacts or likelihood at the time of the audit. Each audit starts by examining the current processes in place relative to (1) laws or regulatory requirements, (2) agency policies and procedures and (3) industry best practices.

During the audit “planning” phase, we assess the engagement-specific conditions and risk, informing and confirming the audits’ objectives and scope. Also, relevant controls to mitigate these risks are also reviewed and identified.

The audit “field work” phase then examines the design of the identified controls to determine if the intent meets the regulations, policies, etc. If the controls are designed to adequately mitigate the risk (control environment), we move on to assess the degree to which the controls are mitigating the risk (control activities). Any areas identified where the control environment or activities do not adequately mitigate the identified risk are identified as an exception.

Exceptions are then defined as either findings or observations.

- **Findings** are the results of the evaluation and verification of evidence against audit criteria showing non-compliance with a policy, procedure, manual, standard, or industry best-practice.
- **Observations** are issues that may be compliant with requirements, however, the auditor has determined that the issue poses the potential risks of becoming a finding in the future if recommended changes are not put in place to prevent occurrence.

Audit Topics Reviewed

This section of the report encompasses audit areas we reviewed this audit cycle:

a. Incident Control Plan (ICP):

The Sounder ICP, effective in May 2024, was compliant. Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) requires that Sounder Commuter Rail adopt and comply with a written Internal Control Plan for reporting incidents and accidents. This document outlines Sounder Commuter Rail's compliance with requirements and components found in 49 CFR 225.33.

The ST Senior TSS Specialist (FRA Reporting Officer) consistently reports to the FRA monthly, as required by 49 CFR 225. The reporting exceeds the FRA's requirements by categorizing the types of incidents and accidents for the agency, further improving data through trend analysis from identifying and mitigating risks in the Lakewood Subdivision.

i. Evidence Requested and Reviewed:

To evaluate the effectiveness of the ICP, the audit team:

- Interviewed staff responsible for the direction and oversight of the ICP:
 - Sound Transit the Manager of Transportation Safety and Security, the Senior Transportation Safety and Security Specialist.
- Reviewed the following documents:
 - Sounder Internal Control Plan (ICP); May 13, 2024, Version 12
 - Monthly FRA reports from August 2023 to August 2024

ii. Section (a) findings:

We found no instances of non-compliance with the Incident Control Plan.

iii. Section (b) observations:

We found no opportunities for improvement with the Incident Control Plan

b. Accident and Incident Notification Guidelines:

FRA reporting requirements for accidents and incident notifications meet the intent of the regulatory requirements set forth by the FRA, internal regulatory requirements of the Sounder System Safety Plan (SSP), and the Sounder Commuter Rail ICP. Sound transit monthly reports to the FRA verified the consistency of documented processes and the timeliness and accuracy of the reports per FRA regulation. ST TSS Division procedures and Sounder Notification Guidelines ensure a consistent process is documented and followed per 49 CFR 225 rules.

i. Evidence Requested and Reviewed

To evaluate the effectiveness and compliance of accident and incident reporting processes, the audit team:

- Interviewed staff who are responsible for Accident and Incident Notification, including:
 - Sound Transit Executive Operations Director of Commuter Rail, Bus & Paratransit
 - ST Manager of Transportation Safety and Security
 - ST Senior Transportation Safety and Security Specialist
 - ST Director of Insurance and Claims
 - Senior Risk and Claims Analyst
 - BNSF Superintendent of Suburban Operations
- Reviewed:
 - Sounder Internal Control Plan (ICP); May 13, 2024, Version 12 review and documented evidence of monthly FRA reports from August 2023 to August 2024 for compliance.
 - TSS SOP-01: Agency Safety Plan review & approval process
 - SCR.SOP-10003, Sounder Safety Incident Notification Procedure: Sep 2019
 - Sounder Notification Guidelines: Jan 2020
 - Sounder Notification Guidelines Matrix: May 2020
 - TSS-SOP-TSS02-FRA-RPTG, Rev 1.0 Jul 2022
 - EXD-SOP-10005 Operations Incident/Event Notifications: Rev 1.2 Feb 2023
 - Accident and Incident reports are performed by the ST FRA Reporting Officer (SCR TSS Specialist) and sent monthly as required by 49 CFR part 225. Additional information is detailed in the 49 CFR 270 audit report performed concurrently with this internal safety audit.
 - Submitted SCR FRA reports: Aug 2023 – August 2024

ii. Positive Practices

- The FRA 225 Reporting Officer exceeded the FRA reporting of pedestrian strikes on the Lakewood Subdivision by investing in the types of incidents for better agency data analytics for focusing safety resources.

iii. Section (a) findings:

We found no instances of non-compliance with Accident and Incident Notification

iv. Section (b) observations:

O. 1. – The SCR ICP does not provide guidance on reviewing the report before submission to the FRA.

- While a process is in place for incident reports to be reported through respective Sounder Ops and Responsible Officers to report to the FRA, there is no guidance within the ICP on reviewing the report before submission to the FRA.

Appendices

Appendix A: List of interviewed staff

The audit team interviewed the following individuals during their safety audit of Sounder Commuter Rail. Staff will be listed by position titles only:

- Sound Transit
 - Executive Operations Director of Commuter Rail, Bus & Paratransit
 - Deputy Director – Commuter Rail Operations
 - Director – Insurance & Claims
 - Manager – Transportation Safety & Security
 - Senior Transportation Safety & Security Specialist
 - Commuter Rail Mechanical Specialist

- BNSF
 - Superintendent of Suburban Operations

Appendix B: List of documents and records reviewed

The audit team reviewed the following documents and records during the safety audit.

- **Sounder Commuter Rail documentation and records**
 - Sounder Commuter Rail System Safety Program: May 2024, Version 3.0
 - Sounder Internal Control Plan (ICP); May 13, 2024, Version 12
 - Sounder Commuter Rail System Safety Program: May 2024, Version 3.0
 - Sounder Notification Guidelines: Jan 2020
 - Sounder Notification Guidelines Matrix: May 2020
 - SCR Internal Control Plan for Accident and Incident Reporting: May 2024, Rev. 12
 - SCR.SOP-10003, Sounder Safety Incident Notification Procedure: September 2019

- **Sound Transit documentation and records**
 - Sound Transit Integrated Preparedness Plan: January 2024, Version 7.0
 - EXD-SOP-10005 Operations Incident/Event Notifications: Rev 1.2 February 2023
 - TSS SOP-01: Agency Safety Plan review & approval process
 - TSS-SOP-TSS02-FRA-RPTG, Rev 1.0 Jul 2022
 - Monthly FRA Reports: August 2023 – August 2024
 - SCR Safety Action Item Registry (SAIR) Log: August 2023 – August 2024
 - ST Incident Report Form: September 24, 2021 – Train A 17031-24A Holgate Yard
 - Email communications between Sound Transit FRA Reporting Officer and the FRA: January 2024 – August 2024

- **FRA documentation and records**
 - FRA 49 CFR 270 – System Safety Program: Up to date as of October 2024

- **Amtrak documentation and records**
 - AMTRAK MAP X15: September 24, 2021 – ST 107 damage estimates

Sound Transit's Title VI notice of rights

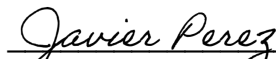
Sound Transit conducts Title VI equity analyses for service and fare decisions to ensure they are made as equitably as possible.

More information on Sound Transit's Title VI notice of rights and the procedures to file a complaint may be obtained by:

- Phone: 888-889-6368; TTY Relay 711;
- Email: stdiscriminationcomplaint@soundtransit.org;
- Mailing to Sound Transit, Attn: Customer Service, 401 S. Jackson St. Seattle, Washington 98104-2826; or
- Visiting our offices located at 401 S. Jackson St. Seattle, Washington 98104.

A complaint may be filed directly with the Federal Transit Administration Office of Civil Rights, Attention: Complaint Team, East Building, 5th Floor – TCR, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE, Washington, DC 20590 or call 888-446-4511.

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