

HB63 Office of Railroad Safety, sponsored by Rep Mike Schultz, (<https://le.utah.gov/~2023/bills/static/HB0063.html>) was passed in the 2023 general session, and then amended in the 2024 general session by **SB235 Railroad Amendments sponsored by Sen Wayne Harper** (<https://le.utah.gov/~2024/bills/static/SB0235.html>) The amended bill has resulted in the delay of implementation of the Utah Rail Safety Office until May of 2025. Rulemaking regarding safe work areas for rail employees has also been delayed.

Speaking on behalf of 500 Utah railroad employees who work for Union Pacific Railroad and Amtrak, I implore you all, as public servants who understand the importance of these issues, to not allow SB253 to repeal this critical legislation. UDOT Rail Division is ready and able to have the rail inspectors hired and for them to begin their necessary inspections of the railroad tracks and infrastructure as soon as possible following the upcoming implementation date of May 2025.

Several significant train derailments have recently occurred in other states that could have been prevented by railroad and car and track inspections:

- East Palestine, Ohio, on February 3, 2023



- <https://www.nts.gov/news/press-releases/Pages/NR20240625.aspx>

- Near Pueblo, Colorado on October 15th, 2023



<https://www.nts.gov/investigations/Pages/RRD24FR001.a>

Colorado has since then established a new Office of Rail Safety within the PUC to promote transparency, accountability, and safety in all rail operations.

32 states have State Programs and inspectors similar to the Utah program

Specifically in Utah, these accidents could have been prevented:

- Ogden, Utah, on March 2, 2023



<https://kutv.com/news/local/union-pacific-train-derailment-ogden-rail-yard-cars-spill-magnesium-chloride-non-hazardous-material-no-hazmat-cleanup-medical-supplement-chemical-compound>

On April 11, 2024 two Union Pacific rail employees were severely injured in Ogden when they were driving down a narrow road in a UTV. Their vehicle was struck by a train adjacent to them. The UTV was crushed and flipped over with them inside. Emergency responders had to use the jaws of life to extract them from the vehicle. A close-clearance issue contributed to the accident. If HB63 had been implemented, rulemaking regarding walkways and clearances would have been in place that potentially would have closed the area that the accident occurred to UTV operation. Both of these rail employees have yet to return to work due to the severe injuries that they sustained in that accident. They have had multiple surgeries and are lucky to be alive.

There is no more time to waste. Please do everything in your power to protect railroad employees and the communities that the trains run through by allowing the Utah Office of Railroad Safety to come into being. We are begging you.

Sincerely,

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