

Railroad Safety: Engineer Work Shift Length and Schedule Variability: Rced-92-133



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U.S. Government
Accountability Office (GAO)

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RAILROAD SAFETY: ENGINEER WORK SHIFT LENGTH AND SCHEDULE VARIABILITY: RCED-92-133

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BiblioGov. Paperback. Book Condition: New. This item is printed on demand. Paperback. 30 pages. Dimensions: 9.7in. x 7.4in. x 0.1in. Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO reviewed the Railroad Hours of Service Act, focusing on whether: (1) railroads comply with the requirement that employees work no more than 12 continuous hours without a minimum of 10 consecutive hours off duty, and spend at least 8 consecutive hours off duty in a 24-hour period; (2) safety could be improved by amending the act to reduce from 12 to 10 the number of hours that an engineer is allowed to work; and (3) work schedule factors other than the maximum number of hours allowed affect safety. GAO found that: (1) the four railroads reviewed comply with the provisions of the Hours of Service Act and, 99.4 percent of the time, give engineers at least 10 hours off duty following a work period of 12 or more hours; (2) estimates show that engineers rarely work more than two consecutive shifts with 9 or fewer hours off duty between shifts; (3) analyses of accident data show that reducing the maximum number of hours allowed per shift may have little effect on the number of rail accidents that occur, because only 4.5 percent of all human-factors-caused accidents in 1989 and 1990 occurred after 10 hours in an engineer's shift; (4) reducing the maximum allowable workoff-duty periods to a 10-hours-on, 10-hours-off cycle would increase the variability of engineers' work cycles, increasing fatigue; (5) scientific research indicates that variability in work-cycle start times disrupts natural human sleep-wake cycles and can lead to fatigue and diminished performance; (6) the start time variability of engineers' work cycles was quite pronounced during the 2 a.m. to 6 a.m. time period; and (7) it could not isolate or...

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