

## FRIDAY'S MAIL

**TEAMSTERS NEWS**

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## **HIGH ALERT REPORT MOVES DOT TO ACTION RAIL WORKERS HAVE NEW SWITCHING RULES**

(Washington, D.C.)—The U.S. Department of Transportation issued an emergency order this week that mandates that all railroads take necessary steps to position and monitor track switches. The Teamsters Union applauds this order, and believe this is an encouraging sign that the government is finally addressing some of the rail safety issues brought to light in the Teamster Rail Conference's recent report High Alert.

"The DOT has finally taken action to fix the problem of misaligned track switches," said John Murphy, director of the Teamsters Rail Conference. "We had wondered how many more deaths it would take before the DOT ordered the Federal Railroad Administration to take concrete action on the problem of track switches left in the wrong position."

According to the DOT release, this year switch misalignments have caused at least nine deaths and nine crashes. In particular, the crash in Graniteville, South Carolina, claimed the life of eight, among them was Chris Seeling, a locomotive engineer and member of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) a division of the Teamsters Rail Conference.

The High Alert report details first-hand observations by rail employees of the security and safety breaches present on the nation's rail system. Shipments of ammonia, chlorine, propane, styrene, ammonium nitrate and radioactive waste are frequent cargo on the rail system and the prospect of crashes due to misaligned switches should be of vital concern to government officials.

"The type of track switches that the DOT refers to in its emergency order are those in 'dark territory'," Murphy said. "These switches exist in an area of track which are not tied into an electronic signaling system. The reason why they aren't is that the rail corporations have been too cheap to invest in a unified monitoring system."

"This should serve as a long overdue wake-up call," Murphy said. "The rail carriers' security systems are woefully inadequate and the consequences can be devastating. In the hands of the wrong people at the wrong place at the wrong time, it could be catastrophic."

\*To obtain a PDF file of the report, "High Alert: Workers Warn of Security Gaps on Nation's Railroads" please see the Teamsters Rail Conference section at [www.teamster.org](http://www.teamster.org)