



**Amtrak should take steps to evaluate its safety culture, establish baseline measure
OIG recommends**

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WASHINGTON – Amtrak has acknowledged longstanding challenges with its safety culture, but does not know the extent of these challenges because the company has not established a baseline of its employees’ values, attitudes, and perceptions on safety and safety initiatives, the Amtrak Office of Inspector General found in a report released October 2, 2020.

According to the report, establishing a culture baseline is particularly important as Amtrak is planning a roll out of its federally-mandated System Safety Program Plan, commonly known as the Safety Management System. The company proactively undertook development of an SMS prior to the March 2021 regulatory deadline.

Amtrak’s SMS is meant to redefine the company’s approach to safety by transitioning from a system that reacts to incidents and results in punitive actions to one that proactively identifies risks and mitigates them before safety incidents can occur. Without a baseline of employees’ values, attitudes, and perceptions on safety, it will be difficult for Amtrak to measure whether SMS will achieve the intended results.

To address this finding, the OIG recommended that Amtrak develop and deploy an employee survey to establish a measurable safety culture baseline and use the results to measure its progress in changing its safety culture over time. This is especially important given the significant investment the company is making in its SMS, the report said. The OIG identified prior research by the US Department of Transportation and Federal Railroad Administration that captured 10 elements of a strong safety culture that Amtrak could use in developing the survey.

The OIG is continuing its review of Amtrak’s SMS, and an additional report is scheduled for release next year. More details are available in the full report located on the OIG’s website:

<https://direc.to/fcrh>.

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