



New report: Amtrak has made progress implementing new safety program, but should address gaps in key skillsets to help ensure it can implement the program as intended

For Immediate Release

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WASHINGTON – Amtrak has made progress in implementing its safety management system, including submitting its initial plan 28 months before the March 2021 deadline, executing key components of the plan ahead of the 2024 implementation deadline, and aligning its SMS with federal requirements, according to an Amtrak Office of Inspector General report released today

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.

In prior work, the OIG reported that Amtrak had “mixed success” in implementing its safety programs. For example, the company abandoned its Safe-2-Safer program in 2017 due to inconsistent outcomes and weak employee buy-in, the report said. The current effort differs, however, in that Amtrak’s SMS has been developed in response to federal requirements from the Federal Railroad Administration.

The OIG’s previous work on the SMS noted that the company could better use injury claims financial data to identify and mitigate safety risks, help the company reduce the costs of injuries and incidents, and invest in safety improvements. Additionally, the OIG previously recommended the company evaluate its safety culture and establish a baseline of employees’ values, attitudes, and perception on safety and safety initiatives before rolling out its SMS company-wide.

The company is in the process of executing some key steps in establishing its SMS, such as completing employee training on the fundamental SMS concepts and implementing newly acquired injury tracking and reporting software. In its most recent report on the SMS, however, the OIG found that the company had lost several key staff members in the Safety department since 2019, which company officials acknowledged could create gaps in the skillsets needed to successfully implement the SMS. Amtrak is assessing and replacing some of these positions, but until it assesses all skillsets needed for the program’s next phase and ensures they are in place, Amtrak cannot be sure it will be able to implement the program to its desired outcomes, the report said.

To help ensure the company remains on track to fully implement the SMS on time, the OIG recommended that Amtrak continue to assess the current staffing needs of the Safety department

and address any significant gaps in capacity and key skillsets that could impact the company's ability to execute the SMS to its desired outcomes.

More information is included in the full report which can be downloaded on the OIG's website: <https://direc.to/fuxA>.

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