

Rail Safety Inspector - Track

The State Rail Safety Inspection Program ensures compliance with federal and state safety regulations to help reduce the number of rail accidents. This important program ensures that railroad tracks and equipment are operating safely within Minnesota. MnDOT's Office of Freight and Commercial Vehicle Operations currently employs two Rail Track Inspectors.

What does the rail track inspector do?

The Rail Track Inspector monitors and inspects functions of railroad track and structures to assure compliance with Federal Safety and Health Regulations among railroads, railroad employees, and contractors to railroads within an assigned geographical territory.

Significant duties include:

- Prepare reports of defects and of violations when necessary, collecting sufficient back-up evidence to support agency attorneys in prosecution
- Investigate complaints from railroad employees, the general public, and Legislative or governmental representatives involving unsafe conditions of track or other responsibilities
- Investigate train accidents
- Conduct safety meetings and training sessions for railroad employees

What are some important things to look for?

- Loose or missing spikes, anchors, tie plates, switch plates, screws, and clips
- Ties that are worn, cracked, broken open, unable to hold fasteners
- Track surface deviations
- Rail defects such as shelled rail, crushed heads, cracked or chipped rail
- Missing track signage such as stop signs, Emergency Notification Systems (ENS) signs and W signs for whistle posts which tell trains when to blow horns
- Railroad and bridge worker compliance with safety rules and practices

Why is this work important?

Rail track inspection is important and valuable work that supports the efficiency of railroad transportation, and protects the safety of human lives in the communities in which railroads operate and travel through, and the railroad workers themselves. The inspectors' significant work helps to identify, reduce and prevent defects that ultimately will develop into derailment issues if not repaired.

