



801 North Quincy Street
Suite 500
Arlington, VA 22203

Ben E. Lerner
Vice President – Public Affairs & Communications

PHONE: 703.841.9300
EMAIL: blerner@americanwaterways.com

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The Honorable Amit Bose
Administrator, Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Administrator Bose:

As the tugboat, towboat and barge industry's advocate, resource and united voice for safe, sustainable and efficient transportation on America's waterways, oceans and coasts, the American Waterways Operators (AWO) respectfully requests that the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) correct an erroneous statement on its website regarding the safety of rail transportation of hazardous material relative to other modes.

In the wake of the recent catastrophic derailment of a Norfolk Southern train carrying hazardous cargo in East Palestine, Ohio, several media outlets covering the incident have [erroneously reported](#) that rail is recognized as the safest method for transporting hazardous materials in the United States, and have cited the FRA as their source for that assertion.

Specifically, the FRA website page discussing "Hazardous Materials Transportation" today [reads](#): "Rail transportation of hazardous materials in the United States is recognized to be the safest method of moving large quantities of chemicals over long distances."

According to a [study](#) conducted by the Texas A&M Transportation Institute's Center for Ports and Waterways, released in January 2022, barge transportation is the safest mode of freight transportation in the United States. The study specifies:

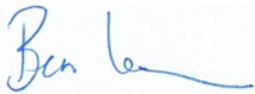
- Data for 2001-2019 shows that trucks have 239% more spill incidents than barges, and rail cars have 287% more spill incidents than barges.
- Inland waterways transport has lower injury rates than rail or truck: For every one injury in the inland marine sector, there are 96 injuries in the rail sector and 1,145 injuries in the highway sector.

- Inland waterways transport has lower fatality rates than rail or truck: For every one fatality in the inland marine sector, there are 26 fatalities in the rail sector and 120 fatalities in the highway sector.

AWO respectfully requests that the FRA revise its website, either by removing altogether the above-referenced sentence stating that rail transport of hazardous materials in the United States is recognized to be the safest method of moving large quantities of chemicals over long distances (and similar language), wherever it may appear on FRA webpages; or by clarifying that rail is “recognized to be the safest *land-based* method of moving large quantities of chemicals over long distances” (emphasis mine).

The men and women of the tugboat, towboat and barge industry are proud to work for the safest mode of freight transportation in America, and to work alongside the freight rail industry as part of our nation’s intermodal supply chain. We appreciate your attention to this matter and are happy to assist you as needed to help resolve it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ben Lerner". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Ben E. Lerner
Vice President – Public Affairs & Communications