



ARIZONA CORPORATION COMMISSION

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Congress Extends Deadline for Railroads to Install High Tech Safety Measure Arizona Corporation Commission Inspections Ensure Safety on AZ Rails

(Phoenix) Congress passed a short-term extension for the nation's railroads to implement a federally mandated high-tech GPS safety feature that would help prevent train collisions and derailments. The Arizona Corporation Commission's Railroad Safety Division experts say that the delay will not compromise safety in the state.

The technology known as positive train control, or PTC, automatically slows or stop trains carrying hazardous materials or passengers. Experts believe that had PTC been in place, it would have prevented deadly crashes, like the one in Philadelphia earlier this year. Congress agreed to extend the deadline for companies to install the technology from the end of this year until the end of 2018.

The Arizona Corporation Commission's Railroad Safety Supervisor Brian Lehman explained that the technology is already in operation here in Arizona. Lehman said that 500 miles of the 600 miles of the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe line in northern Arizona is equipped with the technology.

The line from Williams to Phoenix still needs to be completed along with all of Union Pacific's lines in the southern part of the state.

"As far as safety is concerned we would like to see the most advanced system up and running," said Lehman. "We are not surprised by the extension, though, because of the high price tag for the railroads."

Lehman says while PTC is a good safety enhancement it doesn't replace the Commission's rigorous inspections.

"The railroads in Arizona are very safe," he said. "We work very closely with the railroad companies to ensure they understand what they need to do to be in compliance," he said. "I think our strength really lies in our education program focusing on what needs to be done before a violation occurs."

Lehman said overall derailments and accidents around the state have been diminishing. There have been no major incidents in the state for several years.

The last major accident in Arizona was in 1995 when an Amtrak train derailed southwest of Phoenix, killing one person. That crash was linked to sabotage, not a failure in any systems.

The Commission's federal safety ranking is in the top third with the Federal Railroad Administration. Commission inspectors inspect an estimated 1,500 miles of track each

year. The Section also completes 2,115 freight and tank car inspections and 2,517 hazmat inspections, along with 144 operating practices inspections annually.

Lehman credits the success of the Division to their thorough communication and training with the railroads.

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Freight railroads already have spent billions on the PTC development and some estimate the entire cost could reach as much as \$20 billion. The extension pushes back the installment deadline to December 2018 for most companies and as late as 2020 in some circumstances. President Obama is expected to sign the extension.