

***Will it be a voluntary or mandatory program?***

In January 2007, the General Accounting Office (GAO) published a report on rail safety, entitled *The Federal Railroad Administration Is Taking Steps to Better Target Its Oversight, but Assessment of Results Is Needed to Determine Impact*. In this report, the GAO recommended against the FRA adopting mandatory risk management approaches, saying that “the agency is currently pursuing various initiatives to reduce train accident rates. In our view, these initiatives need time to mature to demonstrate their effects and, subsequently, an informed assessment would need to be made about whether additional actions are warranted.” In the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008, however, Congress requires the FRA to develop a regulation that requires certain railroads to develop risk reduction programs, and to submit Risk Reduction Program Plans for FRA review and approval. At this time, the regulation is under development and will not be implemented until 2012. For this reason, the RRP is currently being designed as a set of voluntary programs that will provide a variety of interventions for the industry to pilot and adopt if successful.