DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Railroad Administration

[Petition for Extension of Waiver of Compliance


The existing waiver provides BNSF certain relief from 49 CFR 232.15, Movement of defective equipment; 49 CFR 232.103(f), General requirements for all train brake systems; and 49 CFR 232.213, Extended haul trains; and a statutory exemption from the requirements of title 49, United States Code section 20303. BNSF renew its request to expand the scope of the waiver to include coal trains operating over the Pikes Peak Subdivision in Colorado and across the Sand Hills Subdivision in Nebraska.¹

On April 12, 2019, FRA granted BNSF a test waiver to conduct a pilot program on a segment of its system to “demonstrate that the use of wheel temperature detectors to prove brake health effectiveness (BHE) will improve safety, reduce risks to employees, and provide cost savings to the industry.” BNSF asserts the expansion would improve train braking performance and safety by reducing brake pipe air losses on all BNSF coal trains (particularly important during winter operations), and accomplish the following goals:

- Validation of braking performance of BNSF coal trains moving south through Colorado and east through Alliance, Nebraska;
- Improvement of the braking performance of individual cars identified with cold or hot wheels;
- Increased testing of car brake systems with Automatic Single Car Test (ASCT) devices;