NOTICE OF NON-COMPLIANCE:

2025 WMSC AUDIT OF METRORAIL'S CONTROL CENTER AND RAIL OPERATIONS – FINDING #7

ISSUED FEBRUARY 5, 2026

Summary

As part of the 2025 WMSC Audit of WMATA's Control Center and Rail Operations, the WMSC found that Metrorail uses Microsoft Teams chats during safety events but has not demonstrated a review of these records when determining the facts of these events.

As a result, a corrective action plan (CAP) is necessary to address this finding. The WMSC Program Standard states in section 9.C.3.a that "Within 30 days from the date the WMSC issues a finding or recommendation, WMATA must propose a suitable CAP (corrective action plan)." CAP WMSC-25-C0304 should have been developed and a draft submitted to the WMSC by September 26, 2025, however, WMATA has objected to, and has not provided a draft corrective action plan.

Authority

The Washington Metrorail Safety Commission (WMSC) Compact (P.L. 115-54), Article IV, Powers, Sec. 30(a) states "In carrying out its purposes, the Commission, through its Board or designated employees or agents, shall, consistent with federal law: (a) Adopt, revise, and distribute a written State Safety Oversight Program[]" and Sec. 30(c) states ''(c) Require, review, approve, oversee, and enforce the adoption and implementation of any Corrective Action Plans that the Commission deems appropriate[.]" Further, WMSC Compact Sec. 31(c) provides that the WMSC may "[c]ompel WMATA's compliance with any Corrective Action Plan or order of the Commission by such means as the Commission deems appropriate…."

Pursuant to WMSC Compact Sec. 30(a) and 30(b) and 49 CFR sec. 674.27(a)(1), version 8 of the WMSC Program Standard became effective on October 1, 2025 (maybe found at https://wmsc.gov/program-standard/). Program Standard sec. 9.C states that "Each finding issued by the WMSC requires WMATA to develop a suitable CAP. The WMSC may also require WMATA to develop a CAP due to other types of findings or conclusions, including from the sources noted in Section 9.A."

This Notice of Non-Compliance is brought in accordance with Program Standard sec. 11.B:

> In the event WMATA fails to comply with any provision of this Program Standard, the WMSC may issue a notice of non-compliance, provide notice that the WMSC is invoking a power provided in Section 11.C, or both. The WMSC will identify the noncompliance issue and state any action required of WMATA in an email to the WMATA Executive Vice President and Chief Safety & Readiness Officer, or the General Manager. WMATA must

then respond by the deadline set by the WMSC. If WMATA fails to address the issue, the WMSC may take further action described in this Section 11.

Background

Metrorail regularly utilizes Microsoft Teams chats when there are accidents, incidents, events or issues on the Metrorail system which are causing service disruptions. When investigating safety events, all possible sources of information should be reviewed (Program Standard Sections 7.A, 8.B.3.) These chats include vital information for investigations and need to be recorded as such.

Metrorail personnel use multiple Microsoft Teams chat channels to discuss and inform personnel, including management personnel, of incidents and events that affect rail operations. Metrorail Procedure Number MICC-ADM-PRO-02, METRO 1 Role and Responsibilities Standard Operating Procedure dated June 24, 2024 states that the METRO 1 role is "The highest authority operational role on the MICC floor. It is the strategic operational role that coordinates command and communication efforts between the Command Line, WMATA leadership and external groups" which includes the responsibility to "Facilitate and Manage incident calls via the Operations Service Disruption TEAMS Channel."

This communication is critical to managing incidents and events that occur on the Metrorail system. Personnel in interviews confirmed that operational feedback is provided to the control center from Metrorail management via the Teams chat channel.

On October 24, 2025, rather than provide a corrective action plan to address the issue, Metrorail provided feedback on Finding #7 of the Control Center and Rail Operations Report, stating that "However, instant-messaging platforms, like Microsoft Teams, do not perform the same function in Metrorail safety event investigations. Posts on Teams channels are informal, spontaneous communications that lack authentication, access controls, and audit trails." It is unclear to the WMSC how this differs from in-person discussions or telephone calls captured by ambient or NICE recordings, which are included in Metrorail's safety event investigations.

In the October 24, 2025 feedback WMATA further states that "The Teams channel at issue does not provide first-hand knowledge of safety events;" In WMSC Investigation Report W-0391, WMATA A&I E24884, which was based on an Improper Door Operation on November 1, 2024, the report states that "At 18:36 hours, the Radio RTC made a blanket announcement to Red Line RVOs (Rail Vehicle Operators) to service Bethesda Station. The SIO (Safety Information Officer) contacted the MICC OM (Operations Manager) to inquire who made the decision to re-open the Bethesda station. MICC OM asked if they were in the Teams chat because that is where the decision was made. The SVP of the MICC and the Senior Director of ELES agreed to re-open the station. The escalators still had not been restored to full service." The first-hand knowledge of the directions given and order of operations was in the Teams chat in that investigation. Metrorail relies on these chat channels for various key operational decision making that drives the direction of a safety event, causation of it, the emergency response to minimize further damage or injury and the restoration of Metrorail operations. The WMSC is not questioning Metrorail's reliance in some cases on these Teams chats as the primary venue for deliberations or decision being made and conveyed. The WMSC is asking that as current investigative procedures direct, reviewing Teams chats coincide broadly with a given safety event and thorough evaluation by WMATA of Team chat message content for contributary factors to the safety event, probable cause for the safety event, or for identifying recommended corrective actions (RCA) to prevent similar safety events in the future.

WMATA's current Department of Safety Investigation Procedures, 4131-3-01 states in section 6.3.2.1 that "To facilitate evidence collection and the incident and accident investigation process, WMATA Information Technology shall ensure that the Department of Safety Investigation team have been granted direct access to systems of record for the purposes collecting pertinent factual data. The Department of Safety team shall directly access the following systems:

- NICE System audio recordings: Metro Integrated Command and Communications Center (MICC) radio and room recordings;
- SPOTS Tool: Online tool that shows Train ID, door opening/closing times and train arrival/departure times for selected station platform;
- Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) surveillance cameras;
- Enterprise Learning System (ELM): Online repository for training records;
- Trapeze: Bus and rail operator and station manager scheduling data;
- PeopleSoft: Scheduling data not included in Trapeze;
- Maximo: Asset / maintenance information;
- Microsoft Teams: Enhanced permissions to record and transcribe meetings; and
- Cognos BI: Access to Safety Data Mart, Enterprise Learning Management, Maximo, and personnel records."

It is necessary that all communication methods regularly utilized to report into and from the Control Center are reviewed in any safety event investigation. The Federal Transit Administration, Report No. 0203, titled 'Effective Practices in Rail Transit Accident Investigations', published in November 2021, states that "Most agencies record radio and telephone communications to/from the control center. In some cases, radio communication between field units is also recorded. Review and analysis of these communications help determine the event sequence timeline and may provide valuable information about communication flow and decisions and actions that were made leading up to, during, and after the accident. As with other data sources, the time stamp needs to be verified for accuracy and synchronized with other recorded data. Investigators may find it helpful to have critical communications transcribed." Utilizing other forms of communication other than radio and phone does not preclude the investigation from having to determine the event sequence timeline or information about the decisions and actions taken leading up to, during, or following an event.

Compliance

The WMSC issued its final report for this audit on August 27, 2025. In accordance with the WMSC Program Standard (section 9.C.3.a) a draft corrective action plan should have been submitted to the WMSC on September 26, 2025. To date, a draft CAP has not been received. For WMATA to return to compliance, WMATA must submit a draft corrective action plan for WMSC review and approval in accordance with the WMSC Program Standard.

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