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WMSC Inspection Report 20261031

ISSUED 11/4/2026

Inspection Details

Title: East Falls Church Interlocking Inspection

Location: East Falls Church (K05) Interlocking Track 2

Date of Inspection: 10/31/2026

Time of Inspection: 6:00am to 12:00pm

Announced (via email to Director, Track and Structures)

Risk-Based (Investigation, Data Review)

Functional Area: Roadway Worker Protection, Vehicles, Track

Hazard Rating: 3C

Overview

On October 31, 2026, the WMSC conducted an inspection of Metrorail's weekend rail service outage at East Falls Church (K05), Track 2 with the goal of observing roadway worker protection (RWP) and roadway maintenance machine (RMM) operations for compliance with the Metrorail Operating Rulebook (MOR) and the Roadway Worker Protection Manual (RWPM). This included observing the on-track safety briefing and requesting roadway access, as well as radio communication between the roadway worker in charge (RWIC), the control center, and various roadway maintenance machine equipment operators.

This is a risk-based inspection based on data review and several recent safety events involving roadway maintenance machines and roadway worker protection. Both aspects interrelate and often occur together in the field, which is why both are a combined focus for this inspection.

Roadway Maintenance Machine Safety Events

The April 22, 2026, collision between a prime mover flatcar (work equipment) and a stationary Metrorail Silver Line passenger train at Metro Center Station is presently under a National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigation with the WMSC and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) parties to that investigation. NTSB published the preliminary report in May 2026.[1]

[1] NTSB Preliminary Report: https://www.ntsb.gov/investigations/Pages/RRD26FR015.aspx

Subsequently, On August 14 and 15, Metrorail reported two additional collisions that met the threshold for safety event code A-3 (b) Collision between two rail transit vehicles. On August 14, 2026, at approximately 9:40pm prime mover (PM50), while towing a flat car (F520), struck track vehicle NSP01 in West Falls Church Yard (K99). There were no injuries. Additionally, on August 15, 2026, at approximately 3:23am three roadway worker maintenance machines (PM41, T006, GC02) collided between East Falls Church Station (K05) and West Falls Church Station (K06) on track 1. There were three minor injuries reported. All injuries were non-life threatening, and all individuals have been released from hospital since the event. All three of these collisions continue to be investigated. The April 22, 2026, collision that resulted in patron injuries is being led by the NTSB. The two more minor collisions that occurred August 14 and 15 by the WMSC and WMATA, respectively. These investigations are ongoing.

On Sunday, September 20, 2026, the tamper machine (T005) derailed at L2 137+00 while mitigating a fouled ballast condition in the RSA work zone (Pentagon Station (C07) to L'Enfant Plaza Station (F03)).

Roadway Worker Protection Safety Events and Inspection Defects

Improper Roadway Worker Protection (O-23) [2] events are rising: In June 2026 there was one RWP violation, three in July 2026, three in August 2026, and five in September 2026. [3] Separate from reported safety events, RWP defects identified during WMSC Inspections comprise about 37% of all WMSC inspection defects. [4] This is up from 33% as of July 2026. Adherence to roadway worker protection rules is critical to the safety of roadway workers and is therefore a continued focus area of the WMSC's oversight activities.

Metrorail certifies roadway workers as proficient in rules and procedures by affixing a special sticker to Metrorail employees' OneBadge [5] so that other personnel may identify that the worker has received the required RWP training and is therefore knowledgeable on the RWP rules.

After concluding the inspection, WMSC Inspectors conducted a debrief with the Roadway Worker in Charge (RWIC) and the Safety Specialist on duty in accordance with Program Standard Section 6.F.1.

[2] In accordance with WMSC Program Standard (Rev. 9) section 7.B Metrorail must "…report all safety events outlined in the Safety Event Notification Matrix in the timeframe and manner specified for each safety event type."
[3] Source: WMSC Safety Events Dashboard (October 30, 2026).
[4] Source: WMSC Inspections Dashboard (October 30, 2026).
[5] WMATA's OneBadge is the official identification method at WMATA and is the only identification card used and recognized by employees and contractors.

Defects and Corrective Actions

WMSC Inspections identify safety issues that may be classified as defects, findings, or recommendations. Findings and recommendations are defined by Program Standard Section 5.E.2 and 5.E.3, respectively. Ordinarily, issues identified in a WMSC inspection report are classified as defects. Defects are specific safety issues of non-conformance/non-compliance that are identified, and that require remedial action.

This inspection did not identify any findings or recommendations and therefore does not require a WMSC Corrective Action Plan in accordance with Program Standard Section 5.E.4.

Observations and Defect Determinations

Occurring at this work zone: Track and Structures (TRST) was tasked with replacing defective ties in the interlocking at East Falls Church (K05) on track 2. The defective ties have led to significant pumping issues (vertical movement of the rail and ties) and have impacted ride quality in the area. The work zone included 12 roadway maintenance machines (RMM) and a team of approximately 20 employees to complete the necessary tasks for that shift.

The work zone was also under a Red Tag Outage. This is a safety procedure that removes energy from the third rail through physical separation of the current. It is necessary whenever working on third rail or components that touch third rail.

The WMSC arrived at the work zone at the time of shift changeover (from overnight/midnight shift to the day/morning shift). The form of protection being used in this work zone was Exclusive Track Occupancy.

1.22 EXCLUSIVE TRACK OCCUPANCY

Risk-based Redundant Protections
Primary Method of Protection
a. Verbal confirmation from the RTC that no traffic will be permitted to enter without RWIC permission
Redundant Method of Protection
a. RTC application of blocking via ARINC (Signal System Logic) b. Supplemental Shunting Devices c. Individual Train Detection
Supplementary Protections
a. Watchperson when rail vehicle movement is required b. Blue graphic image display on ARINC monitor as visual reminder of personnel

Defect 1

The WMSC observed the Track crew leaving the work area at East Falls Church (K05) station at the point where first shift (midnight) was transitioning to second shift (day shift). During this, no Transfer of Authority was observed between the first, midnight shift Roadway Worker in Charge (RWIC) leaving the work zone, and the second RWIC taking over for the day shift.

Roadway Worker Protection Manual (RWPM) 1.10.2 and 1.10.3 requires a Transfer of Authority from RWIC to RWIC:

> RWPM 1.10.2 The relieving RWIC must have a Roadway Worker in Charge Transfer of Authority Form with them.
>
> RWPM 1.10.3 The current and relief RWICs must meet in an area not fouling a track to discuss the transfer

Hazard Rating: 2B

Defect 2

The WMSC attended the On-Track Safety Briefing (OTSB) held outside of East Falls Church Station (K05). At the conclusion of the OTSB, the WMSC identified seven employees not in compliance with WMATA's footwear policy, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Program (4480-2-02/02) dated August 17, 2026. The representative from Metrorail's Department of Safety (SAFE) who was present was quickly notified. Since the employees indicated they were not informed about the rule change, SAFE oversight chose to provide them with a verbal warning about the rule, enabling them to proceed with their work.

Metrorail Program Number: 4480-2-02/02 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Program (dated August 17, 2026) section 6.6:

> 6.6.1 Safety footwear shall meet the following requirements:
>
> > 6.6.1.5 Safety footwear shall have a defined heel when employees are exposed to rough walking surfaces, or when they are utilizing ladders."

Hazard Rating: 4B

Photos



Photos 1 (left), 2 (center) and 3 (right): Show noncompliant footwear (no defined heel).

Defect 3

At the conclusion of the On-Track Safety Briefing, the roadway worker in charge did not check whether employees had the minimum required RWP personal protective equipment (which consists of safety boots, hi-visibility apparel, hard hat, flashlight, and safety glasses).

RWPM 1.9 ON-TRACK SAFETY BRIEFING GUIDELINES

The On-Track Safety Briefing must include the following, as applicable

- Required personal protective equipment.

PPE	Roadway Worker[1]	Other Transit Personnel[2]	Contractors and Visitors
Hard Hat	R	AR	R3
Safety Glasses	R	R	R
Safety Footwear	R	R	R
High-Visibility Yellow Safety Apparel	R	R	NA

Table excerpt from RWPM-27: R represents Required in Table.

Hazard Rating: 2C

Defect 4 (mitigated)

The WMSC observed personnel performing tasks on the roadway without safety glasses and not adhering to section 1.17 of the RWPM.

> 1.17 Required Personal Protective Equipment for On-Track Safety.
>
> Personnel shall be governed by Metrorail's Safety Rules regarding "Required Personal Protective Equipment for On-Track Safety."

PPE	Roadway Worker[1]	Other Transit Personnel[2]	Contractors and Visitors
Hard Hat	R	AR	R3
Safety Glasses	R	R	R
Safety Footwear	R	R	R
High-Visibility Yellow Safety Apparel	R	R	NA

Photo 4: Table from RWPM-27: R represents Required in Table.

WMSC Inspectors informed the RWIC about the violation and as a result, the RWIC instructed the crew to wear safety glasses.

Hazard Rating: 3C

Defect 5

After the On-Track Safety Briefing and before signing the On-Track Safety Briefing form, the WMSC identified that the location on the OTSB form for the Warning Strobe Alarm Device (WSAD)[6] calibration date, serial number, and asset identification was not filled out by the roadway worker in charge (RWIC). The work zone was under a red tag power outage and required WSADs. WMSC Inspectors noted the missing WSAD information on the form to the RWIC who stated they were using a WSAD and filled in WSAD information on the OTSB form.

Later, WMSC Inspectors identified all WSADs in use in the work zone, and none of the WSADs on site matched the WSAD information that was added to the on-track safety briefing form. WMSC Inspectors could find no WSAD matching the RWIC-added WSAD information included in the briefing form.

[6] Warning Strobe Alarm Device (WSAD): The third rail safety device which provides work crews with an alarm in the form of both siren and strobe light if the third rail to which it is connected becomes energized. After confirmation of a power outage, the device is connected between the de-energized third rail and the negative return rail. The device alarms crews if the third rail is energized or if the device is accidentally disconnected or knocked over. (RWPM-64 Glossary.)

Unable to confirm the WSAD information on the form, WMSC Inspectors concluded that the erroneous WSAD information was a violation of the overall responsibilities of the Roadway Worker in Charge.

Metrorail Electrical Operations Manual (EOM)

Section 18.4 General Third Rail Power Outage Requirements.

18.4.8 - A Warning Strobe and Alarm Device (WSAD) must be installed on the section(s) of de-energized third rail within audible and visual range of personnel within those specific sections of third rail when work requiring a power outage is being performed.

Roadway Worker Protection Manual

1.4 ROADWAY WORKER IN CHARGE RESPONSIBILITIES

RWICs are responsible for:

d) Overseeing set-up of all on-track safety protection.

Hazard Rating: 2C

Photos

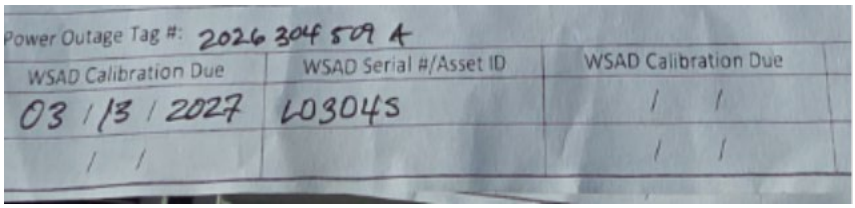


Photo 5: WSAD calibration date and serial number from the OTSB form that WMSC Inspectors were unable to locate at the work site.

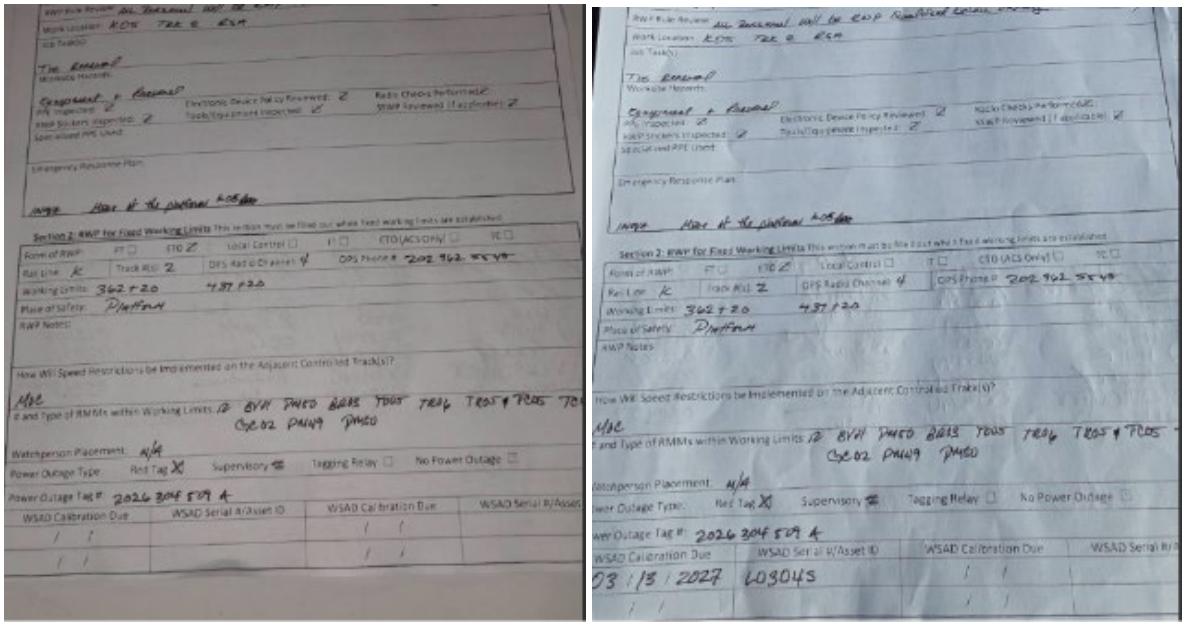


Photo 6 (left): Original OTSB with no WASD information provided. Photo 7 (right): Updated OTSB with one WSAD added that could not be located by WMSC Inspectors at the work site.



Photo 8, 9, and 10: The late-arriving WSADs brought into the work zone by SAFE during the inspection.

Defect 6

After verifying the work crew's safety equipment, WMSC Inspectors walked Track 2 inbound and observed Automatic Train Control (ATC) employees working without a WSAD present and Track and Structures employees using a boom to remove equipment from a flat car directly over third rail. [7] This work zone was under a red tag outage; therefore, a WASD is required according to Metrorail Operating Rules (MOR) 18.4 and RWPM 1.4.

Metrorail Electrical Operations Manual (EOM)

Section 18.4 General Third Rail Power Outage Requirements.

18.4.8 - A Warning Strobe and Alarm Device (WSAD) must be installed on the section(s) of de-energized third rail within audible and visual range of personnel within those specific sections of third rail when work requiring a power outage is being performed.

Roadway Worker Protection Manual

1.4 ROADWAY WORKER IN CHARGE RESPONSIBILITIES

RWICs are responsible for:

d) Overseeing set-up of all on-track safety protection.

e) Ensuring working limits are set-up to provide the appropriate level of protection.

Hazard Rating: 2C

[7] A boom on a roadway maintenance machine (like a tie crane or hi-rail excavator) is the long, movable structural arm attached to the machine body. It functions as a mechanical arm; it pivots, extends, raises, and lowers so the operator can reach over the track, reach off to the sides, or grab heavy materials without moving the entire machine track vehicle.

Defect 7

As WMSC Inspectors walked inbound on Track 2, they observed an employee between the running rails in a conversation using a Bluetooth audio device.

> MOR Electronic Device Policy 13.13.5
>
> Use During Field Work Employees must not use electronic devices while performing field maintenance or inspection requiring full attention. If job-related device usage is required:
>
> a) Stop work,
>
> b) Move to a place of safety, and
>
> c) Conduct device use only from the
>
> designated safe location.

Hazard Rating: 3D

Defect 8 (Mitigated)

WMSC Inspectors walked to the outbound side of the East Falls Church Station (K05) Track 2 and verified that the shunts, lights, and mats were correctly installed at K2 418+00. However, at the inbound protected limit (K2-385+00), WMSC Inspectors observed improper placement of the work limit mat. The work mat was placed outside of the shunts and lights. The mat is required to be inside the shunts and lights. WMSC personnel placed the mat in the proper position and notified the RWIC.

> 1.22.3 Exclusive Track Occupancy Set-Up Exclusive Track Occupancy working limits supplemental protection, consisting of placement of supplemental shunting devices accompanied by two (2) red lanterns or e-flares, and “End Work Area” mats.

Hazard Rating: 3C

Photos



Photo 11 (left): Improper placement of the work mat. Photo 12 (right) work mat placed on the inside of the shunts.

Defect 9

WMSC Inspectors observed rail vehicle movement within the working limits without the use of a watchperson.

> 1.12.6 A watchperson must be utilized any time there is rail vehicle movement within working limits.
>
> 1.20.4 Where moving rail vehicles are present within working limits, a Watchperson must be utilized to provide warning of rail vehicle movement.

1.22 EXCLUSIVE TRACK OCCUPANCY

Risk-based Redundant Protections
Primary Method of Protection
a. Verbal confirmation from the RTC that no traffic will be permitted to enter without RWIC permission
Redundant Method of Protection
a. RTC application of blocking via ARINC (Signal System Logic) b. Supplemental Shunting Devices c. Individual Train Detection
Supplementary Protections
a. Watchperson when rail vehicle movement is required b. Blue graphic image display on ARINC monitor as visual reminder of personnel

Photo 13: Table 1.22 of the RWPM: ETO redundant protections required.

Hazard Rating: 3C

Defect 10 (mitigated)

WMSC Inspectors observed expired class O high voltage electrical safety gloves located in a bucket adjacent to a hot sticking device in the work zone. The expired gloves were given to the Metrorail SAFE employee who took the expired gloves out of service. To mitigate: the Employee in Charge (EIC) used his assigned high electrical safety gloves (that were in compliance) going forward for all electrical work.

This constitutes an example of the evidence that led to open corrective action plan C-319 “Metrorail does not have adequate supervisory oversight to ensure adherence to testing and replacement requirements for electrical safety gloves” is intended to address this sort of non-compliance. To-date, C-319’s actionable items (the steps intended to complete the corrective action) is 44% complete.

Hazard Rating: 3C

Photos



Photo 14: Expired class O high voltage electrical safety gloves present in the work zone.

Defect 11

WMSC Inspectors observed a red track condition: chipping on the surface of the right rail that was greater than 1/8" in depth and greater than 50% of the width of the rail head according to the TRST-1000, Table 107.10A at K2 403+50. This specific track defect was conveyed to the onsite track supervisor.

WMATA's track inspection and safety standards are defined by the Track and Structures (TRST) TRST-1000.

The TRST-1000 rates various track defects by severity using a color-coded system (green, yellow, red, or black conditions):

- "green/minimal wear" condition indicates a condition of serviceability exists when the track structure is maintained well within the limits of track tolerances.
- "yellow" condition indicates damage or wear.
- "red" condition indicates severe damage or a condition that exceeds tolerances.
- "black" condition is the most severe on this condition rating scale and indicates a failing or failed track defect condition.

Table 107.10A: External and Surface Defects

Defects	Defect Size	Level	Operating Speed Until Defective Rail is Replaced
Horizontal Split Head Vertical Split Head Head – Web Separation Split Web Piped Rail	Up to 2 inches	Yellow	Medium
	Over 2 inches	Black	OOS
Bolt Hole Crack	Up to 1 inch	Yellow	Medium
	More than 1 inch	Black	OOS
Rail Base Break Ordinary Break Crushed Head Slivers	---	Black	OOS
Headchecking	Faint diagonal lines along the gauge corner (shallow internal cracks)	Yellow	Medium
	Dense and pronounced diagonal lines on gauge corner (deeper cracks)	Red	Slow
Spalling Chipping	Isolated spalls/chips Spall/chip depth less than 1/8" and width less than 50% of width of rail head.	Yellow	Medium
	Cluster of spalls/chips Shell/chip depth is 1/8" or deeper or width of shell/chip is 50% or greater than the width of the rail head.	Red	Slow
Squats	Faint in appearance, less than 1/3" long or wide (shallow cracking)	Yellow	Medium
	Larger than 1/3" long or wide. Common "Y" shape, Surface crack evident.	Red	Slow

Photo 15: Table 107.10A: Track and Structures external and surface defects rating rules.

Hazard Rating: 3B

Photos



Photo 16: Rail chip at K2 403+50 right rail.

Defect 12

WMSC Inspectors observed a second red condition with chipping on the surface of the rail that was greater than 1/8” in depth and greater than 50% of the width of the rail head according to the TRST-1000 Table 107.10A at K2 405+50 and 405+55 right rail. This specific track defect was conveyed to the onsite track supervisor.

Table 107.10A: External and Surface Defects

Defects	Defect Size	Level	Operating Speed Until Defective Rail is Replaced
Horizontal Split Head Vertical Split Head Head – Web Separation Split Web Piped Rail	Up to 2 inches	Yellow	Medium
	Over 2 inches	Black	OOS
Bolt Hole Crack	Up to 1 inch	Yellow	Medium
	More than 1 inch	Black	OOS
Rail Base Break Ordinary Break Crushed Head Slivers	---	Black	OOS
Headchecking	Faint diagonal lines along the gauge corner (shallow internal cracks)	Yellow	Medium
	Dense and pronounced diagonal lines on gauge corner (deeper cracks)	Red	Slow
Spalling Chipping	Isolated spalls/chips Spall/chip depth less than 1/8" and width less than 50% of width of rail head.	Yellow	Medium
	Cluster of spalls/chips Shell/chip depth is 1/8" or deeper or width of shell/chip is 50% or greater than the width of the rail head.	Red	Slow
Squats	Faint in appearance, less than 1/3" long or wide (shallow cracking)	Yellow	Medium
	Larger than 1/3" long or wide. Common "Y" shape, Surface crack evident.	Red	Slow

Photo 17: Table 107.10A: TRST's external and surface defects.

Hazard Rating: 3B

Photos

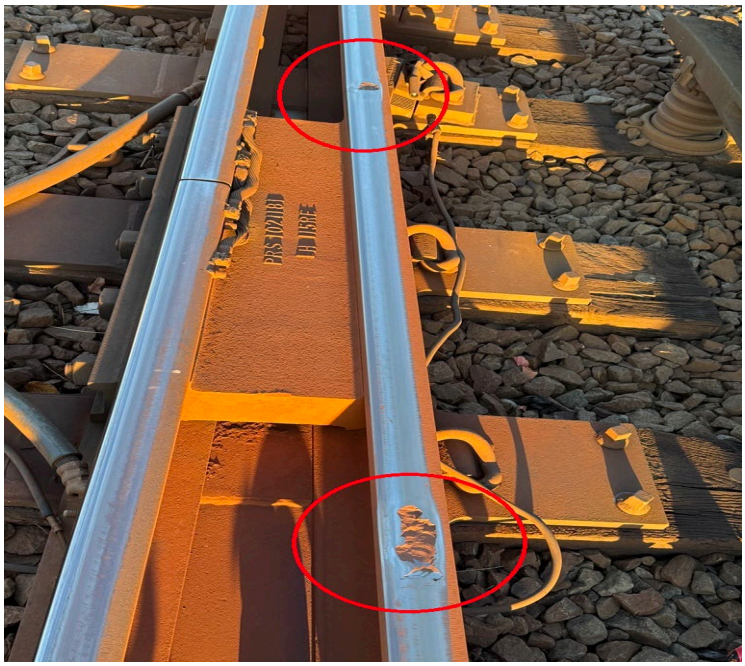


Photo 18: Rail defects at K2 405+50 and 405+55 right rail.

Next Steps

Please respond **by Monday, November 8, 2026,** to acknowledge receipt and to convey responses to the WMSC regarding what, if any, actions will be or have been taken in response.