



ASSOCIATION OF TOURIST & HERITAGE RAIL AUSTRALIA

ABN 19 755 744 868

ATHRA ALERT #40 – October 2008 Use of Mobile Phones

The USA Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) issued Emergency Order 26 on 3 October 2008, concerning the use of mobile phones on USA trains. It can be accessed on <http://www.fra.dot.gov/downloads/PubAffairs/EmergencyOrder26.pdf>. The document is titled “Emergency Order to Restrict On-duty Railroad Operating Employees’ Use of Cellular Telephones and Other Distracting Electronic and Electrical Devices”. The document and related order should be read by tourist and heritage rail managers and workers as it gives details of numerous incidents in the US on railroads following the use of mobile phones by employees.

The FRA Order sets out the prohibitions and restrictions using mobile phones and other electronic equipment that can be distractive while undertaking safety critical duties, but makes provision for the use of railway radio or other communication devices. The Order provides for exceptions such as in emergency situations and when circumstances are provided for in the railroads rules or procedures.

Public Transport Safety Victoria (PTSV) has issued a Safety Alert to accredited rail organisations in Victoria bringing this FRA Emergency Order to their attention.

Key Messages:

- That the use mobile phones and other electronic devices can be distractive while carrying out safety critical work around a railway and result in incidents
- Appropriate procedures need to be put in place to restrict the use of mobile phones around the railway.
- That training, especially in the induction of new workers, in the appropriate use of mobile phones and other devices needs to be incorporated in any training documents and assessments.

Recommended Actions:

- Ensure your safety and operational workers are aware of this Alert and the FRA report and that your workers are aware of the issues of using mobile phones and other electronic devices while carrying out safety critical work.
- Put appropriate rules in place on your railway in relation the use of mobile phones and other electronic devices and provide the necessary safety messages and training to workers.