



5 Ways Track Inspections Add Unexpected Value

Winter 2024 | Mark Coressel

Inspections are key to keeping your track safe and in good working order – whether talking about thousands of miles of mainline rail or a shorter length of industrial siding.

Regular inspections performed by a Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) 49 CFR Part 213-qualified inspector are essential for the safety of your employees and the public. It also supports the efficient delivery of your goods, positively contributing to your bottom line.

But, while using inspections to ensure safety and optimize operations is critical in preventing devastating and costly issues, there are other reasons to do inspections. While these reasons are still grounded in identifying and preventing issues, they also focus on helping you forecast, plan, budget, and strategize. In short, they find value where you didn't know you had any.

Below are five reasons to use a track inspection beyond safety, compliance, and keeping your track operational.

1. Capital Planning and Budgeting

At their simplest, inspections identify issues that need to be addressed. But they can do much more.

A quality inspection report contains specific information, including a detailed description of every issue found, an assessment of its severity, and any regulatory requirements related to the problems discovered. Cranemasters can also provide a thorough remediation plan with detailed estimates for all needed resources upon request.

This information is necessary for meeting regulatory requirements, but it can also help you make accurate and timely budget decisions and plan and execute capital planning strategies.

For instance, a track inspection can identify defects to determine whether you need an expansion. Then, appropriate upgrades and improvement cycles can be planned to ensure you are in the best shape to avoid disruptions.

2. Second Opinion on a Previous Inspection

We all know that a second opinion is never a bad idea when it comes to big decisions.

So, if an inspection reveals a costly and extensive remediation is needed, a second inspection can verify the first inspection, provide alternative solutions, and offer confirming evidence for budget requests.

Even if you know and trust an inspection partner, getting a second opinion on their work, even if just occasionally, substantiates the integrity of the relationship and provides you with the support you need to continue or discontinue it.

When you already have a reliable inspection service provider, a second opinion can also be a way to vet a secondary vendor. Remember, an on-the-field injury can put a winning team in a bad spot if they don't have a great second-string quarterback to step into the game.

Your current service provider might do excellent work for a fair price, but if they can't respond within your timeframe, a secondary provider at the ready – especially one who has an 'on-site next day' guarantee – can help you avoid headaches like that.

Vetting them beforehand with a second opinion inspection can give you peace of mind when you need them in a hurry.



3. Pre-Inspections for Acquisitions

No business acquires a property without considering its overall condition, so property inspections are standard before any acquisition. But, when an industrial siding is one of your requirements, a standard inspection isn't enough.

This is because industrial sidings must comply with all regulations and standards of the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the railroads.

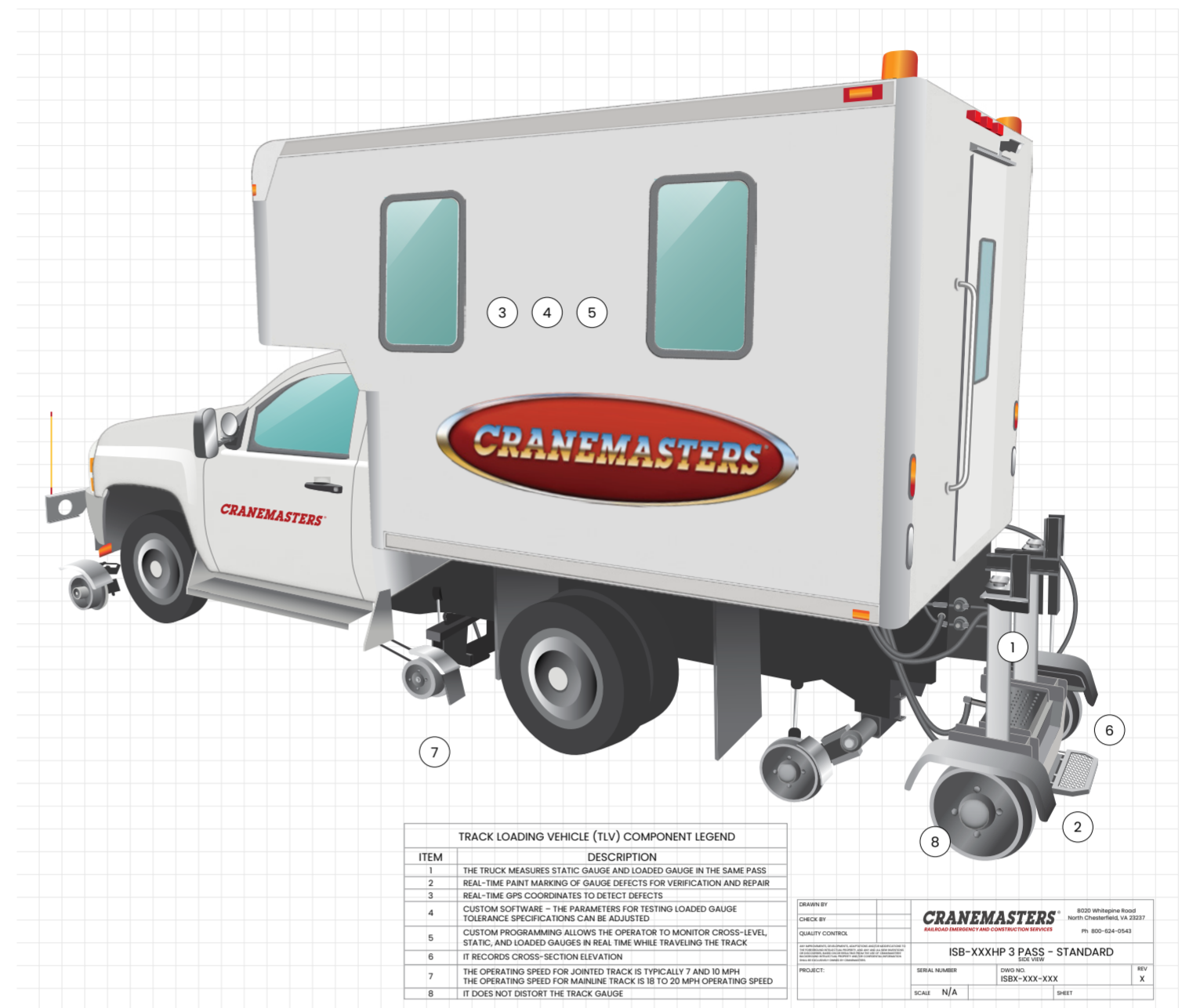
The railroad industry is one of the safest in the country because of the commitment of the FRA and the railroads. Accordingly, penalties for noncompliance with their guidelines can be immediate and costly.

And enforcement can be administered financially with fines and operationally with track closures.

A pre-acquisition inspection can identify compliance issues and outline a detailed remediation plan, including a comprehensive project plan, plan of scope, and cost estimate.

This gives your transaction integrity by providing the information you need to make the best purchasing decision. Put more simply, it ensures security in your buying decision.

It also gives you a powerful bargaining tool. A complete understanding of what it will take to become track compliant lets you negotiate repairs, replacements, upgrades, the overall purchase price, time in escrow, and more.



The Cranemasters Pucket Truck (Track Loading Vehicle) inspects both static gauge and loaded gauge in one pass. [Learn More >](#)

4. Post-Inspections for Acquisitions

Just as an inspection before a real estate purchase can be valuable, so can a post-acquisition inspection. It ensures that the property you now own is in the condition you expect it to be.

It can confirm that all repairs have been completed to spec and comply with all applicable regulations and standards.

In the event of transactional or legal issues, a post-acquisition inspection can be used as case support, either alone or in conjunction with a preliminary inspection.

A post-purchase inspection can catch anything that a preliminary inspection missed.

5. Derailment Risk Mitigation

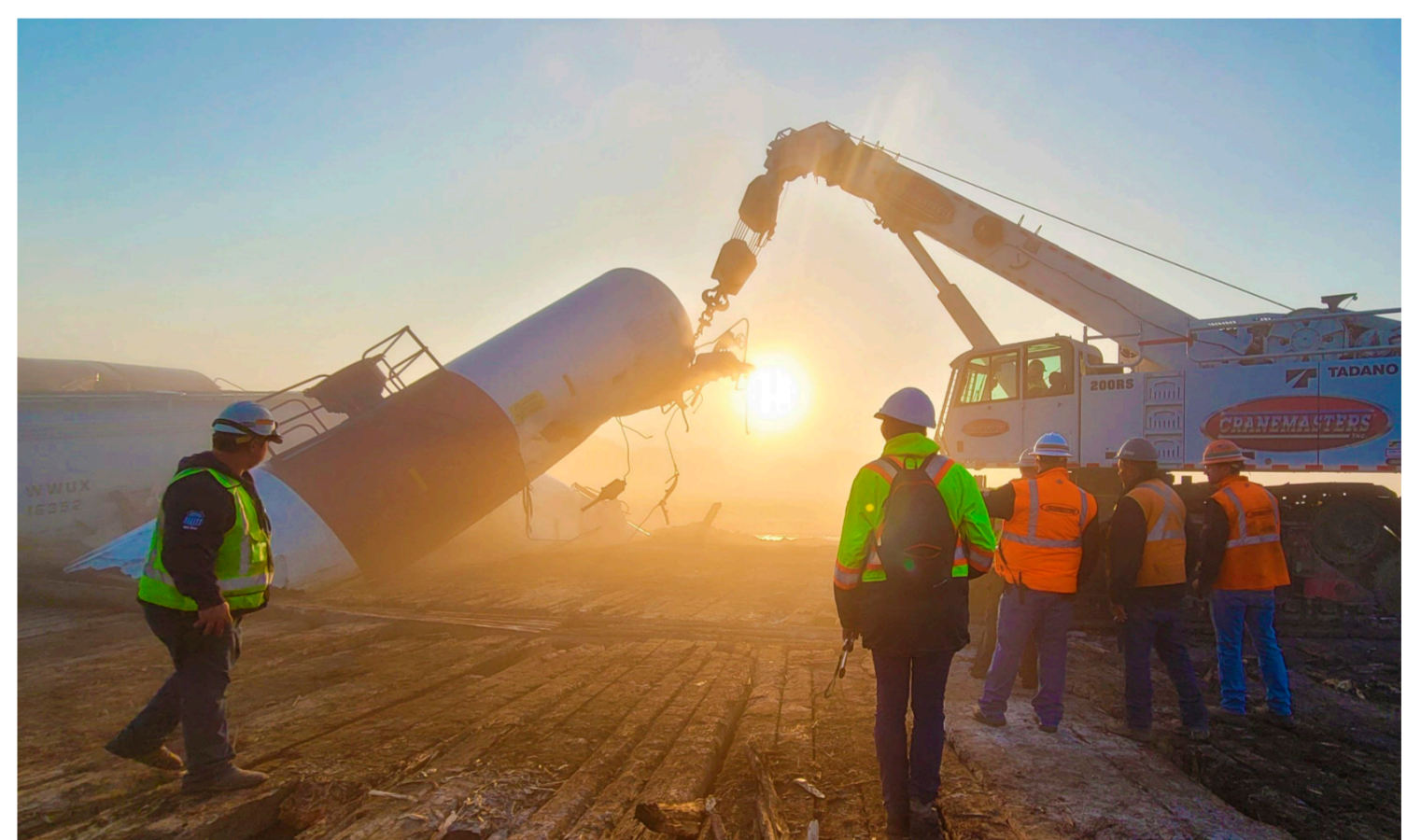
If there's one sure thing in the railroad industry, it's that derailments happen. And they can happen to you.

Having an inspection program specifically tailored for your track is the best proactive way to minimize the possibility of a derailment.

Obviously, the main hope is to catch issues that could directly cause a derailment before they occur. But sometimes, it's about preventing the worst of two possible scenarios from happening.

Imagine your track has a minor issue that, on its own, won't cause a derailment. The problem goes undetected and unrepaired. But, because the minor issue wasn't fixed, it amplified the derailment, creating a much larger, much more costly, multi-car incident with a chemical spill.

So, even when an inspection can't help you avoid a derailment, it can still help ensure any derailment you have isn't worse than it should be.



Cranemasters derailment equipment designed and purpose-built in-house is legendary. When others face seemingly insurmountable complex adversities, they say, 'Call Cranemasters, they can do it.' [Learn More >](#)

The added value track inspections can give your business shouldn't be underestimated. You would be surprised by how you can use them to make some of your most challenging problems easier to tackle.

Remember that Cranemasters offers a 'call us today, we're there tomorrow' guarantee for urgent requests.

Talk with one of our FRA 49 CFR Part 213-qualified inspectors today

Contact us at 1-800-624-0543

Whether you have a general question or a specific project in mind, we can help.

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