From January to August of 2009, 88 people died in accidents associated with the Amtrak railroad. 1118 were either killed or injured. These numbers topped the lists of all railroads in the United States when adjusted per 100,000 miles of travel.

In fact, when adjusted for miles traveled, both casualties and fatalities associated with the Amtrak railroad were three times more likely than on all other railroads:

Casualties (fatalities) per 100,000 miles traveled:

Amtrak: 3.7 (.31)
All other railroads: 1.1 (.11)

Looking at railroad casualties in 2009, Amtrak tops the list of all railroads, followed by Union Pacific and BASF, which handle cargo transport. See pie chart here:

http://tables.googlelabs.com/DataSource?snapid=4606

These findings may not seem that surprising. But when compared to data from a decade ago, Amtrak alone has failed to improve safety conditions among those railroads experiencing large number of casualties and fatalities.

A chart measuring all casualties in 1999 shows that, at that time, Amtrak was only third on the list:

http://tables.googlelabs.com/DataSource?snapid=5202

This can be partly accounted for by the much larger number of miles traveled by other cargo railroad lines, and their decline in miles traveled in 2009 compared with 1999.

For example, Union Pacific trains, which were associated with the largest number of casualties in 1999, traveled roughly 117 million miles in 1999. Amtrak traveled a little more than 24 million miles in 1999. In 2009, Union Pacific trains traveled roughly 99 million, miles while Amtrak trains traveled about 28 million miles.

However, when adjusted for miles traveled, Union Pacific has been able to greatly mitigate its casualty rates over the past 10 year. And in general, casualty rates among all other railroads are also down significantly from 1999 to 2009:

1999 casualties (fatalities):
Amtrak: 3.53 casualties (.32 fatalities)
Union Pacific: 1.54 casualties (.16 fatalities)
All others: 1.81 (.11 fatalities)

2009 casualties (fatalities):
Amtrak: 3.7 (.31)
Union Pacific: .83 (.08)
All others: 1.1 (.12)

Looking at these numbers, while Union Pacific and all other railroads have slashed either the number of casualties or fatalities, or both, associated with their railroads, Amtrak's casualty and fatality rates have remained stagnant.

The following geographic charts show those casualty hot spot areas for:
Amtrak: http://tables.googlelabs.com/DataSource?snapid=3911
And for
Union Pacific: http://tables.googlelabs.com/DataSource?snapid=3806

Based on these charts, I would like to visit California to talk with Amtrak representatives about their safety measures, and Texas to speak with Union Pacific representatives.

In light of these findings, I would like to investigate exactly what measures Amtrak has taken

to lower its casualty rates. How is Amtrak proactively working to protect its riders and employees? If Amtrak is not working to do so, why not?

Also, considering it's greatly decreased casualty and fatality rates, I would like to speak with Union Pacific railroad to find out how they've so drastically improved their safety record. There may be lessons here that Amtrak could implement to protect its riders and employees.