

**§ 51. Liability of common carriers by railroad, in interstate or foreign commerce, for injuries to employees from negligence; employee defined**

Every common carrier by railroad while engaging in commerce between any of the several States or Territories, or between any of the States and Territories, or between the District of Columbia and any of the States or Territories, or between the District of Columbia or any of the States or Territories and any foreign nation or nations, shall be liable in damages to any person suffering injury while he is employed by such carrier in such commerce, or, in case of the death of such employee, to his or her personal representative, for the benefit of the surviving widow or husband and children of such employee; and, if none, then of such employee's parents; and, if none, then of the next of kin dependent upon such employee, for such injury or death resulting in whole or in part from the negligence of any of the officers, agents, or employees of such carrier, or by reason of any defect or insufficiency, due to its negligence, in its cars, engines, appliances, machinery, track, roadbed, works, boats, wharves, or other equipment.

Any employee of a carrier, any part of whose duties as such employee shall be the furtherance of interstate or foreign commerce; or shall, in any way directly or closely and substantially, affect such commerce as above set forth shall, for the purposes of this chapter, be considered as being employed by such carrier in such commerce and shall be considered as entitled to the benefits of this chapter.

(Apr. 22, 1908, ch. 149, § 1, 35 Stat. 65; Aug. 11, 1939, ch. 685, § 1, 53 Stat. 1404.)

AMENDMENTS

1939—Act Aug. 11, 1939, inserted last par.

SHORT TITLE

The Act of Apr. 22, 1908, as amended, which comprises this chapter, is popularly known as the "Employers' Liability Act".

The following are also popularly known as Employers' Liability Acts:

June 11, 1906, ch. 3073, 34 Stat. 232 [Unconstitutional].

Apr. 5, 1910, ch. 143, 36 Stat. 291. See sections 56 and 59 of this title.

Aug. 11, 1939, ch. 685, 53 Stat. 1404. See sections 51, 54, 56, and 60 of this title.

**§ 52. Carriers in Territories or other possessions of United States**

Every common carrier by railroad in the Territories, the District of Columbia, the Panama Canal Zone, or other possessions of the United States shall be liable in damages to any person suffering injury while he is employed by such carrier in any of said jurisdictions, or, in case of the death of such employee, to his or her personal representative, for the benefit of the surviving widow or husband and children of such employee; and, if none, then of such employee's parents; and, if none, then of the next of kin dependent upon such employee, for such injury or death resulting in whole or in part from the negligence of any of the officers, agents, or employees of such carrier, or by reason of any defect or insufficiency, due to its negligence, in its cars,

engines, appliances, machinery, track, roadbed, works, boats, wharves, or other equipment.

(Apr. 22, 1908, ch. 149, § 2, 35 Stat. 65.)

**§ 53. Contributory negligence; diminution of damages**

In all actions on and after April 22, 1908 brought against any such common carrier by railroad under or by virtue of any of the provisions of this chapter to recover damages for personal injuries to an employee, or where such injuries have resulted in his death, the fact that the employee may have been guilty of contributory negligence shall not bar a recovery, but the damages shall be diminished by the jury in proportion to the amount of negligence attributable to such employee: *Provided*, That no such employee who may be injured or killed shall be held to have been guilty of contributory negligence in any case where the violation by such common carrier of any statute enacted for the safety of employees contributed to the injury or death of such employee.

(Apr. 22, 1908, ch. 149, § 3, 35 Stat. 66.)

**§ 54. Assumption of risks of employment**

In any action brought against any common carrier under or by virtue of any of the provisions of this chapter to recover damages for injuries to, or the death of, any of its employees, such employee shall not be held to have assumed the risks of his employment in any case where such injury or death resulted in whole or in part from the negligence of any of the officers, agents, or employees of such carrier; and no employee shall be held to have assumed the risks of his employment in any case where the violation by such common carrier of any statute enacted for the safety of employees contributed to the injury or death of such employee.

(Apr. 22, 1908, ch. 149, § 4, 35 Stat. 66; Aug. 11, 1939, ch. 685, § 1, 53 Stat. 1404.)

AMENDMENTS

1939—Act Aug. 11, 1939, inserted "where such injury or death resulted in whole or in part from the negligence of any of the officers, agents, or employees of such carrier; and no employee shall be held to have assumed the risks of his employment in any case" after "of his employment in any case".

**§ 54a. Certain Federal and State regulations deemed statutory authority**

A regulation, standard, or requirement in force, or prescribed by the Secretary of Transportation under chapter 201 of title 49 or by a State agency that is participating in investigative and surveillance activities under section 20105 of title 49, is deemed to be a statute under sections 53 and 54 of this title.

(Apr. 22, 1908, ch. 149, § 4A, as added Pub. L. 103-272, § 4(i), July 5, 1994, 108 Stat. 1365.)

**§ 55. Contract, rule, regulation, or device exempting from liability; set-off**

Any contract, rule, regulation, or device whatsoever, the purpose or intent of which shall be to enable any common carrier to exempt itself from any liability created by this chapter, shall