Rail Safety Guide for Public Works Employees

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration

In Case of Emergency

- **Locate** the blue and white Emergency Notification System (ENS) sign at the grade crossing.
- **Call for help!** Call the railroad's emergency contact number listed on the blue sign.
- **Communicate** your location, by providing the identification number (see below) and state the nature of the emergency to the dispatcher.

The ENS sign includes:

1 Each railroad's emergency contact number,

2 The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) National Crossing Inventory Number, which identifies the exact location of the crossing to the railroads.

Emergencies and safety concerns at the grade crossing should be reported by using the information on the ENS sign.

Keeping Railroads and the Public Safe

The mission of the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is to enable the safe, reliable and efficient movement of people and goods for a strong America, now and in the future.

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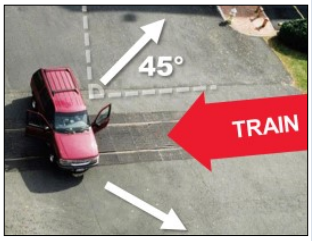
RAIL
Moving America Forward

The Nation's Railroads and Public Works Safety

Dos and Don'ts

- Use caution **snowplowing over tracks**. If track is damaged or hit hard, call railroad so that tracks can be checked and trains stopped, if necessary. Limit salt dispersed directly over tracks.
- Always notify railroad first when **excavating near tracks.**
- **Broken water mains near tracks.** Notify railroad so track can be checked or trains stopped.
- Use caution **hauling lowboy trailers** over railroad crossings. If you get hung up, notify police and railroad immediately so trains can be stopped.
- **Never leave any equipment closer than 25' from outer rail.** Always notify railroad before you are on the railroad right of way (ROW) (25-33' from centerline or more can be ROW) or any time working within 25' from outer rail.
- Report to the railroad any **problems at railroad crossings**, potholes, signal problems or damaged crossbucks. The railroad is responsible for maintenance 18" from outer rail.
- Use caution and notify railroad if **power lines are down.** Some lines on railroad right of way are energized.
- Use caution around railroad grade crossings when **hauling poles.** If you have to stop for traffic lights, stop signs or traffic make sure your poles clear the crossing and are not hanging out over the crossing.
- **Never stand or walk on the steel rails.** The rails become slippery, and you might fall.
- Never operate a **buck or boom truck** closer than 25' from outer rail or swing the boom over the rail without authority from railroad and **trained/qualified railroad flaggers.**
- **When your roadway work is within 25' of the outer rail,** you **MUST** seek authority to perform your work from the operating railroad. The railroad will likely require one or more railroad trained/qualified flaggers to be present during any work performed.
- If you **strike a railroad bridge** with trucks or equipment, notify police and railroad immediately.
- Regarding **brush and trees at public railroad crossing**, the railroad is responsible for site lines on their portion of the ROW. Towns and cities are responsible for the remainder.
- If you're **working within 25' of the outer rail** and a train is passing, stop all work and machinery and don't turn your back on trains. Watch from a safe distance (15' or more away) as trains may have freight or strapping dragging. Don't put yourself **between equipment buildings, ditches, walls, and railroad tracks.**
- Never run **wires or any other items over the tracks** until railroad gives you authority.
- If any **equipment or materials get stuck on tracks**, notify railroad immediately. If you see or hear a train, get off equipment and run towards the oncoming train at a 45° angle away from train. **Do not** take cover in front of the equipment.



- Never cross tracks with a **steel tracked machine such as bulldozers or excavators** unless a railroad employee is present. These machines will roll rails out and next train could derail.

More Resources

FRA has created the "Rail Safety for Emergency Responders" informational video series. Visit https://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P0850 or contact Michail Grizkewitsch at michail.grizkewitsch@dot.gov for further information.