

ANTI-WHISTLING AT REGIONAL ROAD RAIL CROSSINGS

Background

Engine whistling requirements are controlled through the Canadian Rail Operating Rules (CROR). Rule 14(L)(ii) requires whistling for public crossings at grade "except as may be prescribed in special instructions". The railway company can initiate an exemption by issuing an instruction, which eliminates the application of rule 14(L)(ii).

Procedure

Municipalities seeking relief from whistling at public crossings must now contact the pertinent railway company directly to discuss the matter. At the same time, the municipality must also notify the general public and all relevant organizations of its intention to pass a resolution forbidding the use of whistles in the area. The organizations are shown in Schedule C. For any crossings where the road authority is not the municipality itself, then the road authority must also be contacted. The responsible authorities, which are the municipality and the railway company, and the road authority where the road authority is not the municipality, shall jointly conduct a detailed safety assessment of the grade crossings. If the responsible authorities are in agreement, and the crossings meet the requirements of this Guideline, the municipality should pass a motion prohibiting whistling.

Where an agreement has been reached between the railway and the municipality (and the road authority, in the above-mentioned case) that whistling may be discontinued, the railway can arrange to have the whistling discontinued. The parties may request a Transport Canada railway safety inspector to inspect the crossing to confirm their assessment that the crossing meets the requirements of the guideline. If the inspector is of the opinion that the crossings meet the conditions contained in Schedule "A" of this guideline, Transport Canada's Director General Railway Safety will confirm this opinion by letter to the railway involved, following which, the railway may issue special instructions eliminating the application of CROR Rule 14(L)(ii) at the crossings.

If the crossing meets the conditions contained in Schedule "A" of this guideline but the inspector has some safety concerns, the correction of which is a straightforward matter (for example: brush clearing, simple signal circuit shortening), they will be identified in the letter. They should be addressed prior to the elimination of whistling at the crossing.

If the crossing does not meet the general conditions set out in Schedule "A" or if there is a serious safety concern, the parties will be advised by letter of the safety concerns and that the whistling should be retained. Once the corrective measures have been carried out, the inspector may again be invited to re-inspect the locations. Examples of such problems are trespassing, queuing, the absence of necessary automatic warning devices, and so forth.

Ordinarily, the inspector will visit the site after the railway request; however, he or she may become involved sooner.

In the case where the railway does not agree to a prohibition of whistling, it should inform the municipality of its reasons and also advise Transport Canada. All parties involved in this whistling elimination process must remain aware of their roles and responsibilities under Section 11 of the Railway Safety Act (RSA). Further information on these roles and responsibilities can be found in section 1.3 of the Guideline – Engineering Work Related to Railway Works (Section 11 – Railway Safety Act).

Conditions

The following outlines suggested conditions for crossings where relief from whistling is being sought:

1. Crossing warning systems should be as indicated on the attached Schedule A.
2. Generally, whistling restrictions should be on a 24 hour basis. Under exceptional circumstances, and following consultation with Transport Canada, relief from whistling may be permitted between the hours of 2200 and 0700, local time. However the protection requirements should be the same as those required for a 24 hour whistling relief.
3. Rules, respecting the sounding of locomotive bells, should still apply.
4. Where a crossing has experienced two or more accidents in the past five years, even if the requirements laid out in Schedule A are met, the responsible authorities should undertake a thorough safety review.

Schedule A

Warning Systems Required Where Whistling Is To Be Eliminated

	Motor Vehicle Crossings (No. of Tracks)		Pedestrian/Bikeway Crossings (not adjacent to motor vehicle crossings) (No. of Tracks)	
Maximum Train Speed at Crossing	1	2 or more	1	2 or more
Stop & proceed	Flagging or FLB	Flagging or FLB	RCS (Note 2)	RCS (Note 2)
Up to 15 m.p.h.	FLB	FLB & G*	Flagging, or maze barriers & guide fencing (Note 5)	Flagging, or maze barriers & guide fencing (Note 5)
16 - 50 m.p.h.	FLB	FLB & G	FLB, maze barriers & guide fencing (Note 5)	FLB & G
Over 50 m.p.h.	FLB & G	FLB & G	FLB & G	FLB & G
* Except in cases where there is no possibility of a second train occurrence.				

Notes:

1. Railway advance warning signs (Type WA-18, 18L, 18R, 19R, 20R) should be installed on all vehicular approaches as per clause A.3.4.2 of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Canada.
2. RCS is pictogram type reflectorized crossing sign. These are mandatory at all public crossings.
3. FLB is flashing lights and bell.
4. FLB & G is flashing lights, bell and gates.
5. Guide fencing is for the purpose of preventing detours around the maze barriers. The design should be site specific.
6. Additional signs, signals, or a combination thereof may be required if specific safety problems exist at a particular crossing or if requirements, as outlined in the grade crossing regulations, exist for a higher form of protection.
7. Normal railway operations shall not result in approach warning times of an automatic warning system of more than 13 seconds longer than the "Approach Warning Time".
8. Traffic signals within 30m of a crossing with automatic warning systems shall be interconnected. Traffic signals over 30m from a crossing with automatic

warning systems shall be interconnected if queued traffic reaches the crossing.

9. Notwithstanding the above, there may be other safety factors such as a high level of trespassing, queuing, and frequently poor environmental conditions, including fog or blowing snow, which may require a higher level of crossing protection or else the retention of whistling.