FLAG PROTECTION FOR TRAINS AND LOCOMOTIVES

Each railroad must have in effect an operating rule which meets the following requirements:

(a) The main tracks within yard limits may be used, clearing the time an approaching designated class train is due to leave the nearest station where time is shown. In a case of failure to clear the time designated class train, flag protection must be provided. In yard limits where main tracks are governed by block signal system rules, flag protection is not required. (b) Trains and engines, except designated class trains, within yard limits must be prepared to stop within one-half the range of visions but not exceeding 20 miles per hour, unless the main track is known to be cleared by block signal indications. (c) Within yard limits, movements against the current of traffic on the main track must not be made unless protected by train order, yard-master or other official under the same restrictions in (b) above.

Flag protection shall be provided: (a) when a train is moving on the main track at less than one-half the maximum authorized speed, flag protection against following trains on the same track must be provided by crew members by dropping off single lighted fuses at intervals that do not exceed the burning time of the fuses. (b) When a train is moving on main track at more than one-half the maximum authorized speed in which it may be overtaken, the crew members shall be responsible for providing protection and must take into consideration grade, curvature of track, weather conditions, sight, distance and relative speed of the trains. (c) When a train stops on the main track, flag protection against the following train on the same track must be provided as follows: a crew member with flagman's signals must immediately go back to the prescribed distance in timetable and place at least two torpedoes on the rail at least 100 feet apart and display at least one lighted fuse. He may then return one-half of the distance to the train where he must remain until he has stopped the approaching train or is recalled. When recalled, he must leave one lighted fuse. When the train departs, a crew member must leave one lighted fuse and until the train resumes speed not less than one-half the maximum authorized speed, he must drop off single lighted fuses at intervals that do not exceed the burning time. (d) If required by the railroad's operating rules, a forward crew member must protect the front of the train by immediately going forward at least the distance prescribed by timetable placing at least two torpedoes on the rail 100 feet apart, displaying one lighted fuse, and remaining at that location until recall.

Flag protection is not required if: (a) the rear of the train is protected by at least two block signals; (b) the rear of the train is protected by an absolute block; (c) the rear of the train is within interlocking limits; (d) a train order specifies that the flag protection is not required; (e) a railroad operates only one train at any given time.

49 C.F.R. §§ 218.31-218.37