NOISE EMISSION STANDARDS

Locomotive Under Stationary Conditions

Locomotives built prior to December 31, 1979, shall not permit sound levels in excess of 93 dba at any throttle setting except idle or in excess of 73 dba at idle when measured 100 feet from the center of the locomotive.

Road locomotives built after December 31, 1979, shall not produce sound levels in excess of 87 dba at any throttle setting except idle, or in excess of 70 dba at idle. Switcher locomotives are subject to the same rule.

Locomotives Under Moving Conditions

Road locomotives manufactured before December 31, 1979, shall not produce sound levels in excess of 96 dba when moving.

Locomotives manufactured after December 31, 1979, may not produce sound levels in excess of 90 dba.

Switcher locomotives built before December 31, 1979, shall not produce sound levels in excess of 90 dba when moving.

Rail Cars

Rail cars shall not produce sound levels in excess of 88 dba at speeds up to 45 miles per hour or 93 dba at speeds greater than 45 miles per hour.

Retarders

Retarders shall not exceed a sound level of 83 dba. This applies only to active retarders, not inert retarders.

Coupling Operations

Coupling operations shall not exceed a sound level of 92 dba.

In general, the measurements will be at a distance of 100 feet from the equipment or from the center line of any section of the track having less than a two degree curve (or a radius of curvature greater than 2865 feet). The specific methods of measuring the sound are set forth in the regulations.

New occupational noise standards in 2006

The FRA is in its final stages to amend FRA's occupational noise standards for railroad employees whose predominant noise exposure occurs in the locomotive cab. It is
scheduled to be issued in June, 2006. FRA's existing standard (issued in 1980) limits cab employee noise exposure to certain levels based on the duration of employee exposure. This rulemaking would modify that standard and also set out additional requirements. The rulemaking would require railroads to conduct noise monitoring and to implement a hearing conservation program, which would include hearing tests (audiograms), training, and monitoring. The rulemaking would also establish design, build, and maintenance standards for new locomotives and maintenance requirements for existing locomotives. FRA expects that this rulemaking would reduce the likelihood of noise-induced hearing loss for railroad operating employees.

42 U.S.C. § 4916