

6-XX Firefighter safety around rail lines

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Background

Firefighters may respond to incidents on or near rail lines, such as motor vehicle collisions and grass or rubbish fires.

Concerns/hazards

When working on or near rail lines, train and rail traffic can present a hazard for firefighters due to the unknown location of trains, the speed at which they may be coming through the area where firefighting operations are ongoing, and the lack of direct means of communication between rail crews and fire crews.

Actions for employers

Employers must:

- provide information, instruction and supervision to a worker to protect the health or safety of the worker
- ensure all workers have and wear appropriate PPE including protective eyewear, clothing, and footwear for the work being performed

Employers should:

- develop operational policies or procedures for working on or near rail lines

- conduct pre-incident joint training with allied first responder agencies and railways

Considerations

Consider the following when developing operational policies or procedures:

- First in crews shall conduct a size up and risk assessment to determine the hazards specific to this incident
- The results of the size up and risk assessment shall guide subsequent actions
- If crews must engage in activities in close proximity to the rail lines, an immediate call to the rail company to stop rail traffic shall be made
- Despite the request to stop traffic and any confirmations that it has been stopped, crews must exercise extreme caution and never assume the rail traffic has actually stopped
- In addition to this request, if crews must work in close proximity to rail lines, the Canadian Rail Operating Rules, Rule 35 for Emergency Protection states:
 - Assign crews along (but not on) rail lines to provide advanced notice to incoming train cars from all directions, at a distance of at least 3 kilometres from the work site to allow for train stopping distance (A flagman must go the required distance from the condition, and in each direction when possible, to ensure that an approaching movement will have sufficient time and distance to be able to stop before the condition).
 - Provide crews completing this function with a red flag and a red light at night (as per Canadian Rail Operating Rules) to be used to alert the rail staff to stop (The Canadian Rail Operating Rules recommend a flagging kit must be carried which contains a red flag and 8 red fuses)
- Ensure that communication (dispatch) centres have accurate information regarding rail lines operating in the area and a means of advising rail operators that fire crews are active in the area
- Ensure crews are aware of emergency placards on the crossing arms containing emergency contact information and location, and the location of rail line information
- Maintain communications with other emergency services also operating at the incident to ensure that all personnel have the most accurate information about incoming rail equipment
- Ensure workers are aware of the hazards of electrified third rails or overhead lines, where applicable

Applicable regulations and acts

Read:

- [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#)
 - clause 25(2)(a) for providing information and instruction to a worker
 - clause 25(2)(h) for taking every precaution reasonable in the circumstances to protect workers

References

Canadian Rail Operating Rules – Section 35 (Emergency Protection)

Related

Consider downloading the [AskRail App](#) for immediate access to accurate, timely data about what type of hazardous materials a railcar is carrying.

Visit [Transport Canada's page on Rail Transportation](#) for information on safe and secure railways, railway operating certificates, incident reporting and investigations, shipping by rail.
