

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:

- assign crews along rail lines to provide advance notice of incoming train cars from all directions, at a distance of at least 2 kilometers from the work site to allow for train stopping distance
- provide crews with red flags to be used to alert the rail staff to stop
- ensure that rail companies receive notice of crews working on or near rail lines
- ensure that communications divisions have accurate information regarding rail lines operating in the area and a means of advising rail operators that 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 owner 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

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.
