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Train Horn Rule

About the Train Horn Rule

In response to an increase in nighttime collisions at locations with state whistle bans, Congress enacted a law that required FRA to issue a Federal regulation requiring the sounding of locomotive horns at public highway-rail grade crossings. It also gave FRA the ability to provide for exceptions to that requirement by allowing communities under some circumstances to establish "quiet zones."

The Final Rule on Use of Locomotive Horns at Highway-Rail Grade Crossings, published in the Federal Register on April 27, 2005, was intended to:

- Maintain a high level of public safety by requiring the sounding of locomotive horns at public highway-rail grade crossings;
- Respond to the concerns of communities seeking relief from train horn noise by considering exceptions to the above requirement and allowing communities to establish "quiet zones"; and
- Take into consideration the interests of localities with existing whistle bans.

The Use of Locomotive Horns

Under the Train Horn Rule (49 CFR Part 222), locomotive engineers must begin to sound train horns at least 15 seconds, and no more than 20 seconds, in advance of all public grade crossings.

If a train is traveling faster than 60 mph, engineers will not sound the horn until it is within ¼ mile of the crossing, even if the advance warning is less than 15 seconds.

There is a "good faith" exception for locations where engineers can't precisely estimate their arrival at a crossing and begin to sound the horn no more than 25 seconds before arriving at the crossing.

Train horns must be sounded in a standardized pattern of 2 long, 1 short and 1 long blast. The pattern must be repeated or prolonged until the lead locomotive or lead cab car occupies the grade crossing. The rule does not stipulate the durations of long and short blasts.

The maximum volume level for the train horn is 110 decibels which is a new requirement. The minimum sound level remains 96 decibels.

Regulations

Federal Regulations about the Use of Train Horns at Crossings

- e-CFR [part 222](#) - Train Horns at Crossings and Quiet Zones
- e-CFR [part 229.129](#) - Sound Level Requirements for Train Horns

The Train Horn Rule

The Train Horn Final Rule Quick Facts

The Train Horn Final Rule Summary
Train Horn Rule (published August 17, 2006)

Use of Locomotive Horns at Highway-Rail Grade Crossings Rulemaking History

Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) - January 13, 2000

Interim Final - December 18, 2003

Final Rule - April 27, 2005

Final Rule - August 17, 2006

Summary of Major Changes in the Amended Train Horn Final Rule

See Also

Environmental Impact Statement

Use of Locomotive Train Horns EIS Record Of Decision

Federal Railroad Safety Authorization Act of 1994

Notices of Adjustment of National Significant Risk Threshold

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Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590
Regional Offices

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