



BY EMAIL

October 12, 2021

SUBJECT: Snow Removal Operations, Rail-Road Crossings

To whom it may concern,

During the winter months, snow removal operations are carried out in order for roads to be safe for its users. Unfortunately, we notice far too often that a build-up of snow on the side of the road, caused by snow removal, is obstructing motorist's visibility at rail-road crossings. In addition, this snow build-up can affect the proper operation of the Automatic Warning Devices (AWD) at the crossing.

Since winter is approaching, CN considers it appropriate to circulate proper snow clearing procedures to road authorities, for distribution to snowplow operators and roadway maintenance workers. To ensure proper snow removal operations, please refer to the Operation Lifesaver brochure entitled *Tips for Snowplow Operators* attached.

In addition to the tips listed in the brochure, the following are some of the best practices for snow removal operations:

- When ploughing snow at crossings, the snow plough blade must be raised before going over the crossing surface to ensure that the blades do not damage the rails.
- Windrows must not be left between the rails or within 5 meters of the track. This can result in unsafe conditions with reduced sightlines at the crossing, malfunctioning warning systems, and trains hitting windrows which could result in injuries and or vehicle damage caused by thrown snow and ice.
- Snow also must not be piled up so as to restrict sightlines on the approach to the crossing.
- When plowing bridges over CN tracks, ensure the plow is not directing snow over the sides of the bridge onto CN's tracks beneath as this can cause damage to our cables and track operations.

CN requests your cooperation in ensuring that these best practices are communicated promptly to snow plow operators and roadway maintenance workers in order to ensure the safety of public level crossings in your jurisdiction. Please be reminded that the Road Authority is responsible to ensure that snow removal operations do not affect, in any way, the safety of public level crossings. We thank you in advance for your cooperation. In the case that snow is permitted to accumulate on the crossing, near the AWD's, or any other location where it may compromise vehicular safety or affect railway operations, please be advised that CN will undertake corrective work at the cost of the Road Authority.

In case of an incident, CN identifies all public crossings with a mile and subdivision marker which is located on the crossing posts or signal box near crossings. A 24-hour emergency number is also identified. 1-800-465-9239. **ANY INCIDENT involving damage to signage, crossing surface or rails at a crossing should be called in to the emergency number IMMEDIATELY.**

Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.
Sincerely,

Kyle Bennett
Sr. Officer Public Works
Canadian National Railway



Tips for Snow Plow Operators

Snowplow operators frequently encounter highway-railway crossings. Special caution is required at these crossings to protect the operator, roadway users, the railway and employees.

Laws and policies vary in each province and company—know the law, regulations and policies that apply in your province and within your organization!

Following the plowing procedures recommended below can prevent needless tragedies.

Approaching a Crossing

- If required, stop the plow before reaching the crossing no closer than five (5) metres from the nearest rail;



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- Before resuming, make sure there is enough room on the other side for the whole unit to clear the tracks, including your vehicle's overhang. Know the length of your vehicle! Remember, the train will be at least a metre wider than the rails on both sides;
- Ensure it is safe to cross the tracks by looking both ways. Open windows/doors and turn off radios or fans so as to see and hear better. Ensure you can see past obstructions such as mirrors, pillars, or attachments;
- Raise the plow blade and wing or other attachments high enough to clear the tracks and signals;
- To avoid stalling, use a gear which will let you cross the tracks without shifting;
- Be especially careful at crossings without gates, flashing lights or bell. Even if there are active warning signals, and they do not indicate a train is approaching, you must look and listen to be sure it is safe to proceed;
- After you have started over the tracks, if the crossing lights begin to flash, **KEEP GOING**. It is safer to continue forward than to reverse.

Snow, Salt, & Chemicals

Avoid piling snow on or near railway crossings. Windrows must be kept to a minimum as they reduce visibility at crossings and may be hit by a passing train.

Thrown ice or hard packed snow could result in possible injury to the public.

- Do not pile snow under gate arms or mechanisms. This may result in the malfunction of railway signal equipment;
- When possible, do not pile snow on access roads parallel and adjacent to the tracks;
- When possible, "clear" crossing approaches to bare pavement in order to expose railway/pavement markings.
- Never dump salt or chemicals directly on or near any highway-railway crossing. Salt or chemicals reduce the resistant properties of track ties and rock ballast. This in turn can cause the electrical signals carried through the rails to short out, resulting in activation of flashing light warning devices or malfunction of train signals.
- To prevent sand from being carried onto the tracks, ensure sand is not applied within three (3) metres of railway crossing tracks;
- To prevent a build-up at the crossing, which could contribute to derailments, avoid or limit the use of abrasives at railway crossings.

Maintenance Considerations

Contact the railway before performing work in proximity to a crossing!

If maintenance requires work within eight metres of the trackage, you need permission from the railway before starting in order to ensure safety and compliance with regulations.

Please remember: **ANYTIME IS TRAIN TIME!** As you carry out maintenance at a railway crossing, crossing signals may activate as little as 20 seconds before a train arrives. An average large truck can take 18 seconds to clear the track area from a standing start.

Emergency Situations/Reporting Hazards

If your plow stalls or gets stuck on a crossing, get out immediately and move quickly to a point at least 30 metres away from the track and the truck. This will reduce the chances of being struck by flying debris if a train hits the vehicle.

If the plow or wing accidentally hits the rail, signage, or signal equipment, report it immediately. Notify your dispatcher and/or contact the railway directly.

Many railway companies post their emergency numbers prominently at crossings. If the number cannot be located immediately, call 911 or the local emergency number.

Police Officer or Flag Person at the Crossing

If a police officer or properly identified railway flag person is at the crossing, obey directions. Remember, however, you are not relieved of the responsibility to ensure your personal safety and you must confirm it is safe to cross the tracks by looking and listening for the approach of a train.

For additional railway safety information, please visit:

- **Website:** www.operationlifesaver.ca
- **Facebook:** www.facebook.com/oplifesaver
- **Twitter:** www.twitter.com/oplifesaver

LOOK, LISTEN, LIVE!

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