

Railcar and Railway Safety

The Risk

Utilizing the railroad is another option for transporting pellets for shipment. The potential risk/hazards for using a rail system include strains, falls from elevated work, contusions, lacerations, crushing injuries, and/or death. The information outlined in this best practice document will assist in managing ways to mitigate the risk associated with loading, unloading, and moving railcars on and off the jobsite.

Risk Mitigation

Only locomotive type equipment such as track mobiles or other types of approved equipment should be used. The use of skid steer loaders or other types of equipment not properly equipped for moving railcars is very dangerous and should be avoided.

Only trained and qualified personnel should operate the locomotive-type equipment (**reference mobile equipment training OSHA standard 1910.178**). Trained personnel understands the importance of constant communication with the personnel loading or unloading the railcars. This person is also trained on the importance of sounding the horn each time before moving railcars and/or approaching crossings.

A communication system should be established when working around railcars such as a radio, air horn, or hand signals.

Fall protection for the loading area if personnel are required to access the top of the railcar should include a load rated system that is safe to tie off and a full harness with retractable lanyard to prevent falls unless the loading area is equipped with an appropriate catwalk and handrail system. Personnel should never ride on a railcar while it is in motion.

Personnel should be trained not to store or park any equipment within closer than eight (8) feet and six (6) inches from the center of the railroad track.

Posted signs that states "Caution – Close Clearance" should be posted on both sides of the close clearance area before the railroad will service cars for loadout.

Install guardrail protection where employee may cross tracks and have a restricted view of the tracks. See example:



When opening railcar doors to prevent strains, lacerations, or broken bones personnel should use a torque multiplier device or a manufactured door opening attachment. **(Reference OSHA standard 1910.178(m)(6))**



Flat cars and all other cars shall be chocked during unloading. Where equipment is not provided with hand brakes, rail clamping chocks shall be used. **(Reference OSHA standard 1910.261(c)(4)(v))**



After cars are spotted for loading or unloading, warning flags or signs shall be placed in the center of the track at least 50 feet away from the cars and a derail set to protect workmen in the car. (Reference OSHA standard 1910.261(c)(9)(ii))



Daytime loading/unloading



Night loading/unloading
requires blue flashing light

Additional References

- Federal Railroad Administration website at www.fra.dot.gov
- Association of American Railroads website at www.aar.org

Disclaimer

These “Work Safety Best Practices” are advisory in nature and are provided for informational purposes only. They are intended to assist USIPA’s member organizations in identifying workplace hazards and providing a safe workplace. These documents are not standards or regulations, and they create no new legal obligations. Likewise, they are not intended to replace or contradict the Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s (“OSHA”) standards and regulations or any obligations established by federal or state statute, rule, or standard.