

2025

# Tacoma Rail Customer Safety Handbook



**Tacoma Rail Emergency Contact**  
**253-502-8867**

# CUSTOMER SAFETY HANDBOOK

## 2025 Edition INTRODUCTION

This handbook is an overview of standards and expectations for the condition and maintenance of your facility to assure the safety of railroad crews working on your property. Following the guidelines in this book will keep rail crews safe, prevent damage to property and freight, and help assure uninterrupted rail transportation service.

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## FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

At **Tacoma Rail**, our commitment to a **safe workplace** is equal to our commitment to providing you with **high-quality, precise transportation and logistics services**. Employee safety is paramount, and it is the foundation of our workplace culture. We look forward to your **full partnership** in upholding this same culture and commitment at your facility, with your employees, and during your rail operations.

This handbook will serve as a helpful, overall guide to keeping your property safe for us all. Remember, your specific responsibilities are formally defined in your **Industrial Track Agreement** with Tacoma Rail and may contain further requirements.

Please be sure to review both documents. For any questions, please contact Tacoma Rail directly.

Yours in Safety and Service,

Alan Matheson  
Superintendent and Chief Operating Officer

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## TRACK MAINTENANCE

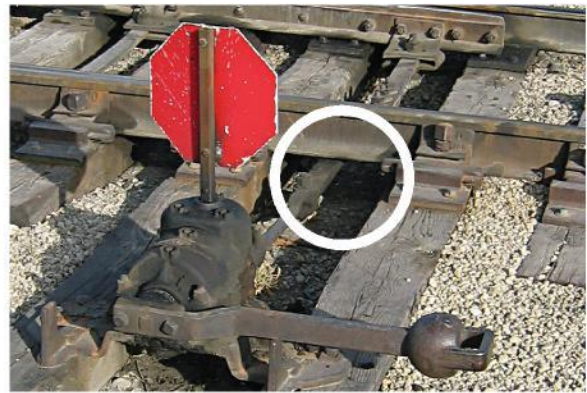
Have a qualified professional rail contractor inspect your track on a regular basis and schedule repairs or routine maintenance. Take a proactive position and assess the need for any major track rehabilitation projects at regular intervals. Keep Tacoma Rail informed when track maintenance is to be scheduled so that switching delays can be kept to a minimum.

**Keep track flangeways clear at all times.** Remove any mud, snow, ice, or debris which may accumulate in these areas, maintaining a flangeway at least three inches wide and 1-7/8 inches deep.

Make sure that all switches in the plant are free of foreign materials and the switch throws completely, without binding.



Keep flangeways clear of debris, earth and ice.



Make sure points and connecting rod are clean and free of debris and have a correct fit.



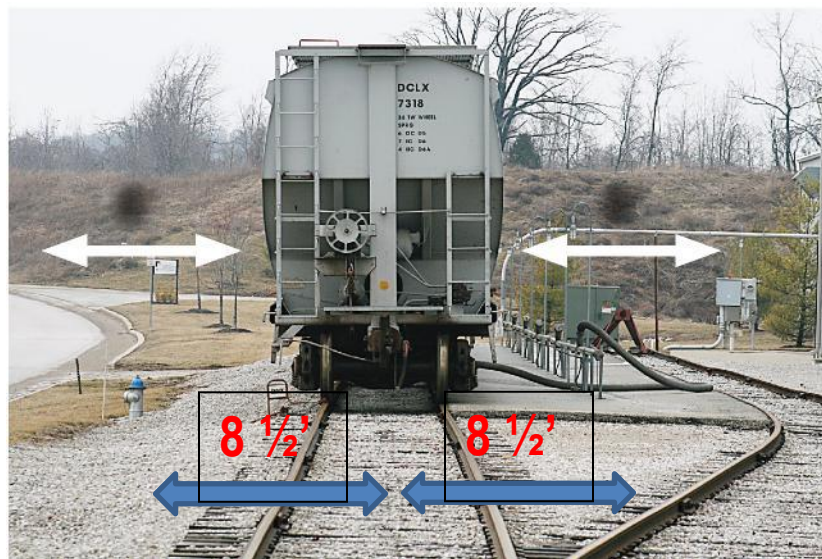
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## WALKING CONDITIONS

Keep your trackage and facility free of walking hazards, including debris, spillage, uneven surfaces, and snow and ice. Ensure proper drainage and do not allow mud or standing water to accumulate.

Material should be neatly stacked in a manner that will not allow any to spill near the track or walkways. **NOTE: In no case is material or equipment to be stacked or stored closer than 8 1/2 feet from track center**, without prior approval from Tacoma Rail track inspectors and operations supervisors.

For additional clearance requirements, see p. 12, *Railway Clearances*.



Keep you facility clean and free from walking hazards. Observe a minimum lateral clearance of 8 1/2 feet from track center outward. Distance must be at least 11 feet from track center outward on curved track.

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## SECURING EQUIPMENT AGAINST UNINTENDED MOVEMENT

After railcars have been spotted in your facility by Tacoma Rail, the train crew will secure the cars with a minimum of one or more hand brakes as conditions require.

In some cases when handling heavy materials with lift trucks in railcars, or when on a grade, extra hand brakes, chocks or blocking may be required to prevent cars from moving. If your company moves railcars within your facility, be certain that when the movements are complete, railcars are safely secured with a sufficient number of hand brakes.

The number of hand brakes required depends on:

- Grade and adhesion
- Number of loaded and empty cars
- Weather conditions (wind and temperature)
- Movement of lift trucks within the cars



If you are not sure if the railcars are secure, place extra hand brakes.

## OPERATING HANDBRAKES

**ALWAYS** observe ladder, step, and grab iron condition before mounting car.

**ALWAYS** be alert while climbing on cars or operating handbrake.

**ALWAYS** operate hand brakes from a proper position.

**ALWAYS** maintain a three point stance when applying or releasing hand brake.

**ALWAYS** maintain a grip with one hand on the car.

**ALWAYS** grip the handbrake wheel with the thumb on the outside.

**NEVER** use more than one hand to operate a handbrake.

**NEVER** reach through the spokes of a brake wheel.

**NEVER** use a leverage device on a geared hand brake.

**NEVER** operate a handbrake while standing on any coupling mechanism.

**NEVER** move railcars while handbrakes are fully applied.

**NEVER** leave handbrakes partially applied.

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## To Apply Railcar Handbrakes

- Place the lever or pawl in the ON position by reaching with the right hand behind the brake wheel.
- Turn the brake wheel clockwise with your right hand to take up the slack in the brake chain.
- After the slack is taken, place your right hand at the seven o'clock position on the rim of the wheel and apply lifting pressure toward you in short pulls.
- Keep your back straight and use leg muscles to apply hard pressure by pushing downward with your right leg as you pull upward on the brake wheel with your right hand.
- Observe that the brake shoes are tight against the wheels and that the cars are completely at rest.

NOTE: Several styles of handbrakes are used on the various types of railcar equipment. This handbook will only cover the most commonly used type.

## To Release Railcar Handbrakes

- Ensure that all personnel are clear of moving equipment, nothing is connected to any of the cars and that the cars can be safely moved, stopped, and the handbrakes can be re-applied.
- Assume the same stance as you would when applying the handbrake.
- Keeping clear of the wheel, move the lever or pawl to the OFF position.
- If handbrake is not equipped with a release lever or pawl, grasp the wheel at about the one o'clock position and turn the wheel counterclockwise until the brake is completely released.

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Step only on the designated walking platforms to access the handbrake.



Observe that the brake shoes clasp against the wheels securely.



Pump style handbrake



To release handbrakes, move the pawl to the OFF position; if not equipped with a pawl, turn the brake wheel counterclockwise.

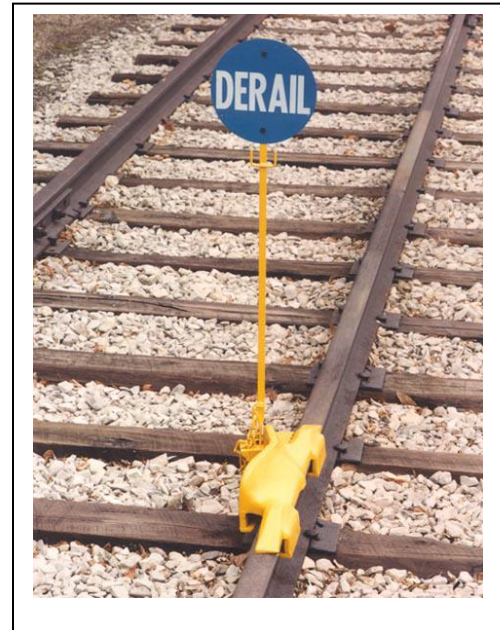
## PROTECTION OF WORKERS



When customer workers are working in, on or around rail cars, they must be protected by a “Blue Flag” or “Sign Protecting Equipment”.

When Tacoma Rail train crews encounter a “Blue Flag” or “Sign Protecting Equipment” on the track or attached to a rail car, they will not couple to the cars on the track. This is for your employee’s safety. When rail cars are ordered out, be sure that workers are clear of the rail cars and the flags/signs have been removed.

Tacoma Rail also recommends that a derailing device is also utilized anywhere that railroad movements could enter the customers facility. Please check with OSHA/L&I for local regulations. Also see your Industrial Track Agreement for any requirements regarding derails.



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## MOVING RAILCARS

Safety procedures must be in place that prevent movement of railcars while workers are in, on or around railcars. Prior to moving, make a walk-around inspection to make sure that employees, loading/unloading equipment, dock plates, connecting hoses, cables or obstructions of any kind have been cleared. The method of controlling and signaling to be used during railcar movement activities must be clearly indicated and understood by all personnel involved.

- Ensure that the track is clear of obstructions for the distance of the movement.
- Advise everyone in the area of the intended movement.
- Discuss the intended move with all personnel involved, including the method of controlling and signaling that will be used during movement activities.
- Observe that the couplers line up, then couple or connect the trackmobile to the car to be moved.
- Release the hand brake(s).
- Before moving or leaving a string of cars it must be confirmed they are all coupled together.
- Someone must always be in a position to observe the leading end of the movement and relay signals to the equipment operator.
- Railcars must never be moved where they will foul tracks beyond the confines of your facility.
- Railcars must be left at least 100 feet from a derail. In certain cases where this requirement cannot be met, prior approval must be obtained from Tacoma Rail Safety Office.  
Always leave railcars with sufficient hand brakes applied to prevent any movement.

Note: Moving rail cars by pushing / pulling with forklifts, Bobcats, or other off rail machines is **not recommended** and **strongly discouraged**. Attaching chains, cables, straps to railcars for pulling is inherently dangerous and very often results in employee injuries. Additionally, damage to the railcars may occur. Report any damage to railcars to Tacoma Rail at once.

## OPERATING RAILCAR DOORS

### Opening Doors

Before opening railcar doors, be sure it is safe to do so. Check to see that all the hinges, rollers, runners are in safe working condition. Be alert to shifted cargo on or in the railcar. Be cautious of bent or protruding doors, as this may be an indication of shifted cargo within or damaged equipment that has gone unreported.

### Plug Doors

Check that door hinges are secure in track, top and bottom, before opening. Plug doors must be securely closed whenever car is being moved.

### Closing Doors

When your facility is ready to release a railcar, be sure that all doors are closed and secured. Tacoma Rail will not move any railcar that has doors that are left open. When closing doors make sure hinges are free of any debris. Keep hands and feet clear of pinch points.

### Bottom Gate Doors

Ensure that gate locks are released prior to opening gate. Prior to opening, the gate opening device must be will into the capstan to prevent damage to the capstan such as bending or deforming the square drive socket. The gate must be securely closed and locked when loading and after unloading. Tacoma Rail will not move hopper cars if the gates are left open.



Check all door hinges and runners for debris and damage.



Typical plug door. This door pops out on rotary hinges then rolls down runner tracks. See the hinge and runner track just below.



Bottom Gate doors and capstan

## SPILLAGE

Spillage must be cleaned up immediately. Ensure that your facility is free from product contamination. If railway equipment was rolled through a contaminated area, you must give the wheels an air pressure or water pressure cleaning. Cleaning is necessary to keep contamination from being spread to other areas.

## LOAD LIMITS

Observe the load limit stenciled on the rail car to ensure that the gross weight of the car and lading does not exceed the maximum weight capacity for the route to be traveled. Make sure that the load is properly balanced within the car.

The Association of American Railroads (AAR) establishes rules governing loading requirements for railcars. Customers are required to follow the loading rules that have been established for the type of lading and railcar they are using. Contact information may be obtained from Tacoma Rail.

## DANGEROUS GOODS

Only dangerous/hazardous materials that are properly placarded and have proper billing, shipping papers per federal regulations will be accepted for shipment by Tacoma Rail. The Hazardous Materials Regulations of the Department of Transportation (CFR Title 49) must be complied with when handling cars containing dangerous commodities. Copies of the regulations are available from Tacoma Rail.

For our customers that transport hazardous materials, it should be noted that all hazmat residue **MUST** be cleaned off the exterior of tank cars prior to being released from your facility. If any tank cars are identified as being non-compliant with federal/state regulations and needing repairs, the cars must be repaired by certified technicians. If special movement authority is required to move tank cars to a repair facility, such information must be forwarded to Tacoma Rail.



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## **LIFTING/JACKING RAILCARS**

A customer must never lift or jack a railcar. If for any reason a car is lifted or jacked the Tacoma Rail Chief Mechanical Officer must be called to arrange for an inspection before the car is moved.

## **RAILCAR DAMAGE**

Customers need to notify the Tacoma Rail Trainmaster or Yardmaster whenever any of the following occur:

- Railcar has been derailed
- The railcars wheels or journal bearing have come in contact with equipment such as lift trucks or other large machinery.
- Parts of railcar have been submerged in water due to flooding.
- Any part of the railcar is bent, punched in, gouged, roof/ceiling damage etc.
- The car has sustained damage from any outside entity (e.g. contractors, vandals, etc).

Please Note that rail car repairs must be done by those who have been trained, qualified in Federal Railroad Administration / American Association of Railroads standards. In house repairs should not be attempted as there are specific federal regulations and standards that must be adhered to.



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## CLEARANCES

Tacoma Rail customers are advised to familiarize themselves with WAC (Washington Advisory Code) 296-20050 "Maintain Side Clearances"  
<http://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=296-860-20050>

### RESTRICTED CLEARANCE

It is crucial that your facility is free of side and overhead clearance restrictions as much as practicable. Where such restrictions exist, they must be communicated to Tacoma Rail and protected by designated warning signs. **Tacoma Rail must be notified before making changes to your facility that may create any rail clearance restrictions.**

### RAILWAY CLEARANCES

Railway clearances refer to the distance from the track to the nearest obstruction. Vertical clearances are measured from the top of the rail. Lateral clearances are measured from the center of the track at a right angle to the rail.

#### Vertical Clearances

The minimum distance for any vertical obstruction is 22 feet above the top of the rail. Power wires carrying less than 750 volts must be at least 27 feet from top of rail. Higher voltages require more clearance.

#### Lateral Clearances

Obstructions of any kind must be kept a minimum of 8 1/2 feet, (see page 4) measured from track center, away from the track. This includes temporary piles of stock, refuse containers, parked vehicles, other equipment, and buildings. Machinery or equipment cannot be operated within 25 feet of Tacoma Rail main track without authority and protection.

#### Sight Lines

Clear sight lines must be maintained along the track. Materials, equipment or other obstructions must not be left where they can affect the ability to see approaching train traffic, especially at public and private road crossings.

#### Emergency Situations

**Tacoma Rail must be notified immediately** should any unexpected condition cause an obstruction to be within the vertical or lateral clearance limits, if sight lines are compromised, or if it becomes necessary to operate equipment within 25 feet of Tacoma Rail main track.

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## CROSSING TRACKS

- Prior to crossing tracks watch for movement in both directions.
- Do not stand or walk between the rails of any track.
- The rail surface is a slip hazard; do not step or walk on the rails.
- Cross at least 25 feet from the end of a standing car or locomotive.

## CROSSING OVER STANDING EQUIPMENT (RAILCARS)

Walk around cars whenever possible. However, if you have to cross over cars or set or release a handbrake, use extreme caution and adhere to these guidelines:

**NEVER** try to cross over moving cars.

**NEVER** put your feet on any moveable component such as a coupler or cut lever.

**NEVER** cross under a car.

**ALWAYS** use safety appliances such as ladders, handholds, and platforms.

**ALWAYS** maintain a “three point contact” with equipment and safety appliances: two hands + one foot, or two feet + one hand at all times.

## WORKING NEAR TRACKS

- Stay clear of tracks whenever possible
- Be alert to train movements. Expect the movement of trains, engines, cars, or other on-track equipment at any time, on any track, in either direction.
- Never move equipment across tracks except at established road crossings.
- Stay away from tracks when visibility is poor.

## **SAFETY POLICIES FOR CUSTOMERS ON Tacoma Rail PROPERTY**

Because railway facilities and operations can be dangerous, Tacoma Rail safety standards apply to everyone on our property. In addition, Roadway Worker Safety Rules, developed and enforced by the Federal Railway Administration (FRA) must be complied with to work on or near Tacoma Rail tracks. Specific training and obedience to the rules are required by the FRA and significant fines can result from a violation.

### **Safety Requirements**

Be aware of the following safe working practices prior to being on, or in close proximity to, rail equipment or track:

- Excluding offices, safety boots are required on Tacoma Rail property.
- High-visibility safety vests with reflective striping must be worn.
- Seat belt use is required in all vehicles on company property and public roadways.
- Hearing protection must be worn in all designated areas and whenever noise levels exceed 84 decibels.
- Hard hats are required in designated areas and under certain other conditions.
- Stay 20 feet away from tracks unless under the supervision of a Tacoma Rail flag person.
- A thorough job briefing must be performed with the flag person before coming within four feet of the rail.

## **IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION**

**24/7 Tacoma Rail Emergency Reporting Number..... (253)-502-8867**

*Note: For emergencies at your facility that pose an imminent threat to life or property, dial 911 prior to calling the Tacoma Rail reporting line.*

**Tacoma Rail Trainmaster.....(253)-396-3161**

**Tacoma Rail Mechanical Department.....(253)-502-8934**

**Tacoma Rail Crossing Warning Malfunction .....(877)-811-8180**  
***\*Please have crossing identification number\****

**Tacoma Rail Safety Office.....(253)-335-6131**

## **Local Rail Contractors**

**Rail Car Repair;  
Harbor Rail Services.....(253)-442-8301**

**Track Maintenance;  
Railworks.....(360)-262-9444  
Coast Rail.....(253)-573-1028**

**Environmental Cleanup;  
NRC.....(800)-899-4672**