

**Transportation
Safety**



**Training
ADVISOR**



June 2026

Railroad crossings

Get on board with the regulations



**Warning against unauthorized
USDOT Number sales**

**USDOT reinforces expectations
placed on SAPs**

Information and resources to help your drivers operate safely



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& Associates, Inc.**
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MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Cross with caution

Drivers may dismiss railroad crossing safety as something not worth worrying about, but across the U.S. in 2025 alone, there were over 2,000 highway-rail grade crossing collisions.

Despite the symphony of awareness that is an oncoming train, drivers sometimes miss the signs and find themselves at a dangerous junction.

According to 2025 Federal Railroad Administration statistics, nearly half (941) of all the U.S. railroad crossing collisions in 2025 happened in Texas, California, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, and Georgia.



Driver disqualification

Aside from putting drivers in extreme danger, a conviction for a highway-rail grade crossing offense while operating a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) requiring a commercial driver's license (CDL) will disqualify the driver from driving a CMV. The offenses, which are listed in 383.51 of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs), include:

- Failing to stop or slow down when required,
- Failing to have enough space to completely cross without stopping,
- Failing to obey a traffic control device or the directions of an enforcement official, and
- Failing to negotiate a crossing because the CMV has insufficient undercarriage clearance.

Disqualification period for railroad-highway grade crossing offenses:

1st conviction	Minimum 60 days
2nd conviction in 3-year period	Minimum 120 days
3rd or subsequent conviction in 3-year period	Minimum 1 year

A driver who's disqualified may not drive a CMV, and their motor carrier may not require/allow the driver to drive a CMV during the disqualification period. Make sure your drivers know how to stay in compliance to avoid these long-term consequences. ♦



Lucero Truskowski

Lucero Truskowski joined J. J. Keller & Associates, Inc. as an Associate Editor in 2022. Lucero edits, writes, and researches content on a variety of topics, including transportation, human resources, and driver training. She holds a Master of Science (MS) in Professional Writing from New York University.



TRAINING BLUEPRINT — RAILROAD CROSSINGS

How to stay on the right side of the tracks

In 2025, there were **2,266** collisions at railroad crossings in the U.S. According to preliminary data from the Federal Railroad Administration, these incidents resulted in **288** deaths and **754** injuries.

With more than 200,000 highway-rail grade crossings located across the U.S., it's critical that all professional drivers know how to legally and safely cross railroad tracks.

TIP: Distribute and review the applicable requirements in Part 392 with your drivers. Stress the importance of compliance.

Get on board with the regulations

Highway-rail grade crossing regulations for commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) are addressed in Part 392 of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs).

Section 392.10 requires that certain types of CMVs stop within 50 feet of the railroad tracks and no closer than 15 feet to the railroad tracks. CMVs that must stop include:

- Buses transporting passengers;
- CMVs transporting any quantity of a Division 2.3 chlorine;
- Certain classifications of CMVs which are required to be marked or placarded (see 392.10);
- Cargo tank motor vehicles, whether loaded or empty, used for the transportation of any hazardous material; and
- Cargo tank CMVs transporting commodities under specific circumstances (see 392.10).

When at a railroad crossing, the driver must listen and look in each direction along the tracks to make certain a train isn't approaching. Drivers must not shift gears when crossing the tracks.

There are also certain instances when stopping at railroad tracks isn't required. These include:

- At abandoned crossings which are marked with a sign as abandoned, or
- At an industrial or spur line railroad grade crossing marked with a sign reading "exempt."

If the CMV isn't required to stop, 392.11 of the FMCSRs requires that the CMV travel at a rate of speed that's slow enough to stop before reaching the tracks.

A CMV may not cross the tracks until the driver is certain the crossing is clear.

Finally, 392.12 of the FMCSRs states that drivers of CMVs must ensure they have sufficient space to drive completely through a highway-rail grade crossing without stopping.

TIP: Make sure your drivers understand the serious nature of this issue by distributing any policies your company may have.

Signaling safety

There are two basic types of warning devices at railroad crossings: **passive** and **active**.

Passive warning devices are not electronic. Passive devices are intended to direct the driver's attention to the crossing. These devices include advance warning, crossbuck, stop, and yield signs.

- An **advance warning** sign:
 - Warns that the road crosses railroad tracks ahead.
 - Reminds the driver to slow down.
 - Prepares the driver to stop if needed.
- A **crossbuck** sign:
 - Is located on the right side of the road before the train tracks.
 - Marks the crossing.
 - Serves as a yield sign.
- A **low clearance** sign:
 - Indicates low ground clearance.
 - Warns of potential problems for vehicles with a low undercarriage.
- A **parallel tracks** sign:
 - Warns drivers of highway-rail grade crossings that appear immediately after making a left or right turn.

Active warning devices activate automatically when a train approaches a highway-rail grade crossing. They include:

- Gates,
- Bells,
- Lights, and
- Traffic signals. ♦

TIP: End with a question-and-answer session to catch your drivers up on anything they may have missed.



The right way to railway

Just like a bus or a large CMV, a train cannot stop on a dime. It takes the average freight train traveling 55 miles per hour (mph) a mile or more to stop.

In good conditions, it takes about 14 seconds for an 80,000-pound, 53-foot rig to cross a single railroad track. Follow these safety practices to make sure you safely execute each stop:



- Begin **slowing down** when you see an advance warning sign.
- **Always expect a train** when you approach a crossing; trains don't always travel at fixed times, so you never know when one is passing through.
- Remember that **trains always have the right of way** (no exceptions).
- **Look and listen** carefully in each direction for the sight and/or sound of a train.
- If unsure that the CMV can safely cross the tracks, **wait for the train to pass**.
- Be sure the CMV can **completely cross the tracks** before starting to cross.
- Make sure **trailer jacks are in the up/raised position** so they don't become stuck on the tracks.
- **Never race** a train or drive around **lowered gates**.
- **Never shift gears** when crossing the tracks.
- When crossing multiple tracks, **watch for a second train**.
- If the warning lights start flashing after you've started crossing the tracks, **keep moving forward** instead of backing up. ♦



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE — RAILROAD CROSSINGS

1. Which part of the FMCSRs cover highway-rail grade crossing regulations?
 - A. Part 390
 - B. Part 392
 - C. Part 380
 - D. Part 381

2. There are around 500–600 highway-rail grade crossings in the U.S.
 - A. True
 - B. False

3. Which of these CMV types must stop within 50 feet of the railroad tracks?
 - A. Buses transporting passengers
 - B. Cargo tank motor vehicles used to transport hazardous materials
 - C. CMVs transporting Division 2.3 chlorine
 - D. All of the above

4. The two basic types of warning devices at railroad crossings are passive and active.
 - A. True
 - B. False

5. Which is an example of a passive warning device?
 - A. Gates
 - B. Bells
 - C. Low clearance signs
 - D. Traffic signals ♦

NAME: _____ DATE: _____



FMCSA warns against unauthorized USDOT number sales

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) has warned the public not to sell, purchase, or lease a USDOT Number or Operating Authority outside of a valid corporate transaction.

When the agency discovers non-legitimate attempts to sell, purchase, or lease such numbers, it will take action to inactivate and revoke both the number and all related registrations. This includes the required safety registrations (49 U.S.C. 31134) and any required operating authority (49 U.S.C. 13901-13905).

What's a USDOT Number?

USDOT Numbers identify the motor carrier, freight forwarder, broker, or entity, just like a driver's license identifies the driver. A USDOT Number will always belong to the same legal person and cannot be leased, sold, transferred, or rented to anyone else. If the FMCSA discovers that someone other than the assigned

legal person is using a USDOT Number, the Number will be inactivated.

What's Operating Authority?

Operating Authority, also known as the MC Number, is needed for carriers to perform certain types of transportation along specific routes, which previously led to frequent transfers of the MC Number. Congress recently changed operating authority so that a carrier with operating authority may operate along any route across the U.S., removing the frequent need for MC Number transfers.

Bottom line

Ultimately, failing to follow the rules and lease, purchase, or sell a USDOT or MC Number outside of a legitimate and valid corporate transaction will lead to inactivation of the Number and all related registrations. Make sure all your transactions are lawful and authorized to avoid consequences. ♦

USDOT reinforces expectations placed on SAPs

In response to several substance abuse professional (SAP) and return-to-duty (RTD) process issues, the USDOT published reminders to SAP and DOT-regulated employers.

The reminders appeared in a *Federal Register* notification on March 4, 2026, "The Do's and Don'ts

for the Substance Abuse Professional and the Return-to-Duty Process in the U.S. Department of Transportation Drug and Alcohol Testing Program."

In the notice, SAPs are instructed to follow all RTD procedures when evaluating DOT-covered employees, and DOT employers are reminded of SAP responsibilities and the RTD process. The USDOT may initiate a Public Interest Exclusion (PIE) proceeding for any SAP found to be in serious noncompliance. When placed on the PIE list, the SAP is prevented from performing services related to DOT drug and alcohol testing.



Why a list of reminders for SAPs?

The USDOT has previously provided reminders to SAPs as issues came to light, so this recent action isn't unique. This newest March 2026 notification is the result of the USDOT learning of recent issues related to SAPs' roles and responsibilities, including: employers having trouble in getting the follow-up testing plans from SAPs; SAPs referring employees solely to online programs as opposed to in-person programs, as appropriate;

SAPs prescribing the minimum number of follow-up tests in response to pressure from consortium/third-party administrators (C/TPA) or risk being removed from the C/TPA's list of recommended SAPs; and many more.

Key points for SAPs

The USDOT provided several key points for SAPs to take action on in the *Federal Register* notice, including the following:

- SAPs must hold and maintain required qualification requirements.

- SAP evaluations must:
 - Be done face-to-face (whether in-person or remote);
 - Delve into the employee’s emotional and mental health and history of drug and alcohol use;
 - Provide a diagnosis, treatment recommendations, and a treatment plan that the employee must complete before becoming eligible for the required follow-up evaluation and subsequent return to safety-sensitive functions (SSFs);
 - Result in a recommended course of education or treatment unique to each employee;
 - Never result in promises to “fast track” the process; and
 - Never provide employees with an estimated RTD timeline before conducting an initial SAP evaluation and assessment.
- SAP reports must include all required elements; must be securely retained for at least 5 years from the date of the second report; must be provided to the employer or subsequent employer when requested; and can be provided to the employee upon request if the follow-up testing plan is redacted.

When are the RTD steps required?

The RTD process applies to employees who test positive, refuse a test, or violate other DOT agency testing rules. The covered employee is removed from SSFs and must successfully complete the program prior to resuming SSFs.

The SAP’s decisions determine whether an employee returns to operating a commercial motor vehicle, plane, oil tanker, train, subway, or controls the valves of a natural gas pipeline. The SAP also decides on the number of follow-up drug and/or alcohol tests over what duration of time after returning to duty. ♦

Answers to quiz on page 5:

1.) **B** 2.) **B** 3.) **D** 4.) **A** 5.) **C** ♦



Next Month’s Topic: Warning Devices

No matter how safely drivers operate their vehicles or how well the vehicles are maintained, there’s always the possibility of being involved in an accident or vehicle breakdown. Knowing how to handle warning devices and what to expect can help drivers handle the situation safely and legally. ♦

Expert Help: Question of the Month

Question: We have two sets of railroad tracks that are so close that after the driver stops at the first set of railroad tracks, when stopping at the second set of railroad tracks, the trailer is on the first set of railroad tracks. Does the driver have to stop at the second set of railroad tracks, since it causes the trailer to be parked on the first set of railroad tracks?

Answer: The regulations don’t specifically address two sets of tracks that are very close to one another. The regulations do say that drivers must only drive onto a railroad crossing if there’s sufficient space to drive completely through the crossing without stopping. If your driver can safely see down both sets of tracks when stopped at the first, then stopping only for the first set might be permissible and safer. If the crossing is truly unsafe and the driver is being forced to violate the rules, you may want to contact a local enforcement agency and/or the railroad to make them aware of the situation.



One thing the driver needs to keep in mind is the length of the tractor trailer. If the length of the tractor trailer doesn’t allow the driver to stop 15 feet from the second set of tracks and have clearance from the first set of tracks, then they should only stop for the first set. ♦

Expert Help

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EDITOR: Lucero Truszkowski

ISSN 2688-1616

GST R123-317687

(78403)

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