



National Grain and Feed Association

www.ngfa.org

NGFA Safety Tips: Shuttle Loading and Rail Safety

...Committed to promoting safety and health in the workplace.

Suggested practices for shuttle loading operations...

Employees need to be able to recognize hazards in the rail yard that could potentially cause harm to personnel, equipment, or commodity. Detailed planning, proper training, and communication are key components for any shuttle load/unload operation.

Effective Communications

Prior to working around railcars, a set of requirements needs to be established between the rail crew and facility employees. Since a loading/unloading operation typically is loud by nature, depending solely on voice and radio communication is not always efficient. One way to address this issue is to use lights during dark hours or a spotter relaying hand and arm signals during daylight hours. Regardless of which method(s) chosen, always ensure that the person(s) you are working with understands what you are trying to communicate before an action is initiated.

Working around Railcars

When an employee or crew member is required to go between or work on the end of cars, the following practices are recommended:

- Engine operator has a clear understanding of the work to be performed;
- Engine operator is notified by employee/crew of movement between cars and verifies by radio;
- Engine operator ensures the equipment will not move until the employee/crew requesting protection has reported by radio that they are no longer between or on the end of the equipment;
- The employee/crew going between or working on the end of equipment is to wait until all movement of equipment has stopped and the slack has adjusted.
- When stepping out from between cars or power units, employees/crew are to watch for equipment moving on adjacent tracks or roadways.

Track Etiquette

- Do not cross within 25' of standing cars
- Do not cross in front of approaching cars
- Step over, not onto, the tracks, frogs or switches
- Do not walk between tracks
- Do not sit on the track or rail structures
- Do not sit on the steps or handrails of a moving power unit
- Do not attempt to mount, cross over, cross under or dismount a rail car while it is moving



NGFA Safety Program

- The NGFA is committed to promoting safety and health in the workplace, and shares the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA's) commitment to protecting employees.
- The NGFA's extensive efforts to enhance safety include unprecedented research and education efforts launched in the early 1980s that helped lead to a dramatic reduction in the number of fire and explosion incidents in commercial grain-handling facilities.
- Each year, NGFA jointly sponsors regional safety seminars with affiliated state and regional grain and feed associations. The one-day conferences focus on keeping grain handling employees physically safe.

Car Roof Operations and Roof Fall Protections

Environmental conditions, such as walkways made slippery by snow, ice, or rain, can cause workers to lose their footing and potentially slip off rail car roof tops. Employees should not stand on any other portion of the car roof other than the walkway.

Windy days can pose an additional hazard for workers on top of the cars.

Riding or standing on the roof of a moving car should only be done while the car is at the loadout spout and when the car is creeping or stopped. Additional safety training is advised for employees at facilities equipped with car roof fall protection systems.

In 2012, the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission issued a decision in *Secretary of Labor vs. Erickson Air-Crane, Inc.*, [Docket Number 07-0645](#) to reaffirm the "[1996 Miles Memo](#)," particularly the determination of where fall protection is feasible (inside or contiguous to a building) and where it is not feasible (away from such areas). The decision also reaffirmed that, for those areas where fall protection is not feasible, administrative controls can be used to protect employees.

Hopper Gates

Railcar hopper gates were designed to open and close easily. Damage, normal wear/tear and weather can all deteriorate a hopper gate to the point of it requiring additional help to move. Tools, such as a large ratchet/socket combo or a pry bar, are often used. The safest way to use a pry bar is for the worker to have a secure grip, feet securely planted, and to pull up with the leg muscles minimizing back strain. To minimize the chance of injury, seek additional help.

Crossing over Cars

An employee should cross only between cars equipped with crossover platforms and hand holds. Always maintain a firm grip and be prepared for sudden movement. Never step on a coupler, uncoupling lever, or draw bar while crossing through cars. Do not cross underneath a coupler, instead, find a car with a safe crossover platform. Never attempt to cross over while the cars are in motion. Ensure that crossover platforms, ladders and handrails are inspected. If possible, use another car in the string to mount or cross between cars. Using a car drawbar as a step can be dangerous because each drawbar has several inches of slack and a foot can easily be caught if the car happens to move or is jarred.

Never cross under a rail car!!!

Disclaimer: The National Grain and Feed Association make no warranties, expressed or implied, concerning the accuracy, application or use of the information contained in this publication. Further, nothing contained herein is intended as legal notice. Competent legal counsel should be consulted on legal issues. Grain handling facilities should contact experienced safety and health legal counsel or a third-party expert if they have questions about the proper way to implement the items addressed in the document.

More safety information at www.ngfa.org

Contact Manager of Training, Education and Regulatory Affairs Jim Seibert, or VP Safety and Regulatory Affairs Jess McCluer at 202-289-0873

NGFA | 1400 Crystal Dr. | Suite 260 | Arlington | Virginia | 22206

NGFA Reference Corner

World-Grain.com Train
loading / rail yard safety

[CLICK HERE](#)

Rail Car Loading/Unloading
and Moving Safety Advisory

[CLICK HERE](#)