

# Rule Change Briefing

Hazmat

## Buffer Cars

May 27, 2021

On March 23, 2021, BNSF became party to Special Permit (SP) 20996 that authorizes the transportation of hazardous materials by rail without buffer cars between placarded cars and certain unoccupied engines with a few restrictions.

To accommodate the new SP, BNSF has updated our United States Hazardous Materials Instruction for Rail (USHMI) effective **June 1, 2021** to include an updated Position-In-Train Chart. With this SP, buffer cars are no longer required between **unoccupied** distributed power units (DPU), dead-in-tow locomotives at or near the rear end of trains, and placarded hazmat carrying cars, except for those commodities that fall under Group A and Group C on the new Position-In-Train Chart.

## Operational Controls While Using This SP:

- An employee may not deadhead in a DPU or dead-in-tow locomotive.
- DPU's and dead-in-tow locomotives must be locked to prevent unintended occupancy during operation.

POSITION-IN-TRAIN-CHART											
GROUP A	GROUP B				GROUP C			GROUP D	GROUP E		HOW TO USE THIS CHART
	<p>May be placed next to, or 1, 2 (Special Permit DOT SP-9271)</p>										<p>Select the applicable column of the Position-In-Train chart. To do so:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Identify the placards and/or markings applied to the car.</li><li>2. Use the shipping document to determine whether the car is loaded or unoccupied. Note: The notation "RESIDUE LAST CONTAINED" on the shipping document indicates a residually shipped.</li><li>3. Identify the car type involved by observation (e.g. tank car, hopper car, gondola, etc.).</li><li>4. Find the applicable section on the chart, based on the placard or marking applied, the load/unload status, and the car type.</li><li>5. Follow the restrictions associated with the placard or marking as the "X"s in the columns indicate.</li></ol> <p>*Authorized only for U.S. to Canada or Canada to U.S. shipments.</p> <p>This word "TOXIC" can be used in place of the word "POISON" on placards.</p> <p>Cars with placards displaying 4-digit identification numbers will be handled the same as cars with word description placards.</p> <p><b>Equivalent Placards:</b></p>
Any Car	Loaded Tank Car	Residue Tank Car	Other Loaded Car	Loaded Tank Car	Residue Tank Car	Other Loaded Car	Any Car	Any Car	RESTRICTIONS		
X	X			X					1) Must not be more than the 6th car from the head end engine consist (operating or dead-in-tow), occupied helper unit, or occupied caboose/business car. If the train does not have at least two buffer cars, then all available buffer cars must be placed between the placarded car and the head end engine consist (operating or dead-in-tow), occupied helper unit, or occupied caboose/business car. The available buffer cars must be equally divided to protect both head end engine consist, occupied helper unit or occupied caboose/business car. Exception: In a loaded tank commodity unit train, only one buffer car is required to be placed between the placarded car and the head end engine consist and occupied helper unit.		
X				X					2) Engine (head end engine consist, DP or dead-in-tow), Note: Engine, DP or dead-in-tow must remain locked to prevent unintended occupancy during operation and no employee may deadhead.		
X	X	X		X	X		X		3) Occupied engine (dead end engine consist or helper unit) or occupied caboose/business car.		
X	X			X					4) Open top cars (including bulkhead flats), when any of the contents, periods beyond the car ends or, if filled, would protrude beyond the car ends.		
X	X			X					5) Loaded flat cars, except closed TOPCOT/OTOP equipment, multi-levels, and other specially equipped cars with tie down bars for handling materials. Railroad cars loaded with tanks, or gondolas with no ends, or loaded with the axes above the top of the car.		
X	X			X					6) Any rail cars, transport vehicles, or freight containers with temperature control equipment or thermal combination engine whether running or not. Note: Does not apply to cryogenic refrigerated equipment.		
X	X		X	X		X	X		7) Any placarded car in another placarding group, except where the placard is any medical placarded car or any car placarded or marked as a Group E.		

## Questions for Discussion

### When a locomotive is occupied, do you still need buffer cars?

Yes, the buffer car requirement still applies to occupied engines, (head end engine consist or helper unit), an occupied caboose or occupied business cars. The new Position-In-Train Chart in Section VI of the USHMI outlines when buffer cars are required.

### Where can I find a copy of the updated USHMI?

The new USHMI will be available for download via the Rules and Timetables Intranet page, beginning June 1, 2021. Prior to this date, the document is available as Coming Soon within the Intranet page and mobile app.