

# Safety Briefing

Transportation

SB-2021-07T  
July 23, 2021

## Releasing Hand Brakes

Within the last 7 days, **two** BNSF employees have had incidents resulting in injury while releasing locomotive hand brakes.

- On July 14, an employee experienced shoulder pain while releasing a locomotive hand brake.
- On July 19, an employee strained his right shoulder while untying a locomotive hand brake.

**If the hand brake cannot be released easily, do not strain to release it. Stop and report the defect to the Mechanical desk and your supervisor.**

This year, we have had **39** injuries/incidents reported by Transportation employees related to overexertion. It is critical to recognize any behavior in our daily activities that can lead to these type of incidents, and take necessary steps to prevent them.



### Questions and Answers For Discussion

#### ❑ What should be done if the hand brake does not move easily?

If the hand brake cannot be released easily, do not strain to release it. Stop and report the defect to the Mechanical desk and your supervisor.

#### ❑ What can be done to help prevent overexertion injuries at work?

The best preventive measure to avoid overexertion is to take the time to perform a thorough Job Safety Briefing (JSB) to identify any overexertion exposures present before the task begins and take necessary actions to minimize the risks.

#### ❑ How can stretching help prevent overexertion injuries, such as muscle strains or tears?

Gentle stretching (with no bouncing) before performing a task lengthens and warms muscles, making them less likely to sustain injury than un-stretched, tighter muscles.

#### ❑ How can you prevent overexertion injuries when operating hand brakes?

- Before beginning a task, gently stretch the muscle groups that will be involved in the work to be performed.
- Use good posture when operating hand brakes to help minimize factors that can lead to injury.
- Maintain three-point contact at all times.
- Face the equipment when possible and maintain proper body position. When a hand brake may be operated from the ground, place both feet flat on the ground outside the rail.
- Stand close the wheel or lever to ensure safe body mechanics.
- Straighten your spine and tighten your abdominal muscles to help stabilize your lower back.
- When using the wheel-style hand brake, keep thumbs and fingers on the outer rim of the wheel. Do not put them between the wheel spoke.

#### ❑ What precautions should be taken if equipment must be climbed to reach hand brakes?

- Some hand brakes may be safely operated from the ground, while many require an employee to ascend/descend. Face equipment and maintain three-point when ascending/descending equipment to safely operate the hand brake.
- Review correct methods for getting on and off equipment and recognize the need for increased safety awareness during bad weather.
- Inspect foot and handholds for wet or slippery conditions before using. Be especially careful when climbing equipment in wet conditions or darkness.

We've proven that railroading can be safe, but we also know it can be unforgiving. Safety is non-negotiable and must always take precedence. Nothing is more important than everyone going home safely at the end of the work day.

Please note that rules and policies that are in effect at the date of issuance of this Safety Briefing are subject to change. Contact Safety/Rules to determine validity before you use the information in this briefing at a later date.



We Choose **Safety.**