

“Train Horn Rule” Glossary

Quiet Zone: A quiet zone is a section of a rail line that contains one or more consecutive public crossings at which locomotive horns are not routinely sounded.

Public Highway-Rail (Grade) Crossing: A location where a public highway, road, or street crosses railroad tracks at grade. For this rule, this includes crossings where a public authority maintains the roadway on at least one side of the crossing.

Private Highway-Rail (Grade) Crossing: A location where a private roadway crosses railroad tracks at grade.

Diagnostic Team: A group of qualified or specially-trained individuals assembled to make objective expert judgements about physical and or operating conditions at highway-rail crossings. In the context of this rule, a diagnostic team assesses grade crossing safety requirements according to safety management principles.

E.O. 15 (Emergency Order 15): Emergency Order 15, issued in 1991, requires the Florida East Coast Railroad (FEC) to sound locomotive horns at all public highway-rail grade crossings. The Emergency Order preempted state and local laws that permitted nighttime prohibitions on the use of locomotive horns.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS): Environmental Impact Statements are required of federal agencies for major projects or legislative proposals that may significantly affect the environment. These statements describe the positive and negative effects of the proposed undertaking and cite possible alternative actions. Impact Statements are required by the National Environmental Policy Act. The EPA reviews and responds to filed impact statements and makes available a national EIS filing system as well as publishing a weekly notice of EIS documents available for review.

MUTCD: *The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*; a guidance document published by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) establishing specifications for highway signs, signals, and pavement markings.

FAA Reauthorization Act of 1996: This legislation added two paragraphs to 49 U.S.C. 20153 (the section of the United States Code requiring this rulemaking). One paragraph required that FRA take into account the interests of communities that had whistle bans in effect during a specified time period. The second required that any rule issued under section 20153 can not be effective until at least 365 days after its publication in the Federal Register.

Supplementary Safety Measure (SSM): SSMs are engineering improvements, which when installed at crossings within a quiet zone, would reduce the risk of a collision at the crossing. SSMs are installed to reduce the risk level either to the level that would have existed if the train horn were sounded (compensating for the lack of the train horn) or to a level below the Nationwide Significant Risk Threshold.

Approved SSMs include:

- Four quadrant gates.
- Medians or channelization devices at gated crossings.
- One-way streets equipped with gates that fully block the street.
- Temporary closure (i.e., nighttime closure).
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Four-Quadrant Gate: Train-activated warning gates that, when lowered, fully block highway traffic from entering the crossing. Gates lower across both approach and departure lanes on both sides of the crossing.

Alternative Safety Measure (ASM): A safety system or procedure provided by the appropriate traffic control authority which, after individual review and analysis, is determined by the FRA to be an effective substitute for the locomotive horn at specific crossings.

ASMs include:

- Modified SSMs (see definition)
- Programmatic law enforcement
- Programmatic education
- Photo enforcement

Modified SSM: An SSM that has in some way been adjusted to accommodate unique circumstances existing at a specific crossing and no longer conforms to the SSM requirements. Modified SSMs are considered ASMs. An example would be traffic channelization devices that due to a nearby intersection are only 45 feet in length instead of the required 60 feet.

Non-engineering ASM: A consistent and systematic program of traffic law enforcement, public education programs, or a combination thereof, that produces a measurable reduction of risk at quiet zone grade crossings.

Risk Index: The predicted cost to society of casualties that are expected to result from collisions at an individual crossing.

Quiet Zone Risk Index: The average risk index for all public crossings in a proposed quiet zone taking into consideration the increased risk caused by the absence of train horns and any decrease in risk attributable to the use of SSMs or ASMs.

NSRT: The Nationwide Significant Risk Threshold is the average Risk Index of all public, gated crossings in the nation at which train horns are sounded.

Wayside Horn: A stationary horn located at a highway-rail grade crossing that is designed to provide audible warning to oncoming motorists when a train is approaching. **The horn is controlled by the same track circuits that operate the automatic warning devices at the crossing.**

Whistle ban or Pre-Rule Quiet Zone: A *whistle ban* is a local prohibition of the sounding of locomotive horns at specific highway-rail grade crossings. Historically, *Whistle bans* were established by local ordinance or through agreements with specific railroads in accordance with existing state law. At whistle ban crossings, no specific safety improvements have been made to compensate for the absence of the audible warning. Pre-Rule Quiet Zones established under this rule may only consist of Whistle Ban crossings that were in effect on October 9, 1996 and on December 18, 2003

Relevant collision: A highway-rail crossing collision that FRA believes could be prevented by sounding the train horn. Specifically, the term excludes collisions with motor vehicles resulting from an activation failure of an active grade crossing warning system; collisions in which there is no driver in the motor vehicle; and collisions where the highway vehicle struck the side of the train beyond the fourth locomotive unit or rail car.