



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Railroad
Administration**

Memorandum

Date: June 15, 1998

Reply to Att. of: MP&E 98-16

Subject: DODX 4000 Series Flat Cars

From: Edward R. English
Director, Office of Safety Assurance and Compliance

To: Regional Administrators, Deputy Regional Administrators,
Motive Power & Equipment Specialists and Inspectors

In the past, inspectors have questioned whether DODX 4000 series flat cars are in compliance with Title 49, CFR, Section 231.6 (a)(3)(I), which requires that "Each handbrake shall be so located that it can be safely operated while the car is in motion".

These cars are designed to have a 2 ½ by 8 inch slot in the car floor near each corner. These slots are considered by the FRA as "grab holes", so that the handbrake can be safely operated using this "grab hole" when the car is in motion.

These cars were built primarily to haul M-1 tanks, which are 12 feet wide. The car floor is only 10 feet - 8 inches wide. The handbrake is located so that the tanks can be loaded or unloaded.

Also, it has been reported that these cars have a missing bottom rod safety support.

These cars are equipped with Buckeye 6-wheel trucks with truck mounted brakes. Because of the truck mounted brakes, bottom rods requiring safety supports are found only on the handbrake truck. There are two bottom rods. One is equipped with two safety supports, while the other has only one. The truck, as designed, lacks a bracket or other location to which an effective fourth safety support can be attached. The brake rod in question measures 35 inches between pivot points. The loss of a connecting pin at the unsupported end of the rod would cause the rod to drop ½ inch over a distance of 7 inches before it encountered the existing safety support. The minimum clearance above the rail would still be more than 2 ½ inches.

Inspectors should take no exception to cars so equipped. Please be governed accordingly.

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