

Frequently Asked Questions: Emergency Notification Systems

If a railroad’s normal operating speed is 25 mph and prior to the dispatcher(s) going off duty a 20 mph speed reduction was issued to all trains operating during that timeframe and calls are forwarded to an answering machine would the railroad be compliant?

As long as the order is put in place limiting train speed to no more than 20 mph over crossings, the railroad could use an answering machine when the dispatcher goes off duty. The railroad would have to check the answering machine immediately prior to the start of duty the next day.

Does the rule prohibit the placement of an ENS sign on a signal bungalow?

No. While the ENS sign on the signal bungalow would not be compliant, there is nothing prohibiting an additional sign on the bungalow.

Are ENS signs required on adjacent (parallel) streets?

No. ENS signs are required on each approach to a crossing. Exceptions: farm crossings, where only one sign is required, and at rail yards, port or dock facilities, in which case one sign is required at each entrance to the facility.

Is the use of a 911 call center allowed to receive ENS calls?

Yes. However, the 911 call center would be considered a third-party telephone service, and as such must comply with all requirements of a third-party telephone service.

Obtaining all information from caller required to be collected by the rule

Notifying railroad immediately and providing all necessary information

Maintain recordkeeping as required by rule

Are ENS signs required on out of service track?

Yes. The rule does not make exceptions for track that is temporarily or permanently out of service. The crossing would need to be permanently taken out of service (closed) in order to not have a sign.

Can the ENS sign use the term “Hazard” in place of “problem?” (Report emergency or problem...)

Yes. As long as the wording clearly conveys the purpose of the sign another term with similar meaning is acceptable.

What is the acceptable orientation for the ENS sign, parallel to the roadway, or facing the oncoming highway user?

Either orientation may be compliant as long as the sign complies with ALL of the provisions in 311 (b) which are:

(i) Is conspicuous to users of the roadway or pathway by day and night; [Note: Consideration should be given as to whether or not the sign would be visible at night, especially at an unlit crossing.]

- (ii) Does not obstruct any other sign or traffic control device at the crossing;
- (iii) Does not limit the view of a train approaching the highway-rail or pathway grade crossing;
- (iv) If mounted on a post, has supports that are crashworthy (i.e., breakaway or yielding).

Additionally, the sign must be visible whether the gate arm is up or down.

The ENS regulation by statute is required to enable the public to report directly to the railroad four conditions:

- a failure of an active warning system;
- a disabled vehicle or obstruction blocking a crossing;
- an obstruction to the view of a train's approach to a crossing;
- any information relating to any other unsafe condition at the crossing.

All of these conditions should be addressed when considering sign orientation.