



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

**Federal Railroad  
Administration**

# Memorandum

Date: June 15, 1998

Reply to Att. of: MP&E 98-69

Subject: Safety Appliance Arrangements on Flat Cars

From: Edward R. English  
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To: Regional Administrators, Deputy Regional Administrators,  
Motive Power & Equipment Specialists and Inspectors

Title 49 CFR 231.6 specifies the minimum requirements for safety appliance on flat cars. However, over the years, other arrangements have been agreed upon without being incorporated into the standards. Therefore, new and reassigned employees, as well as new car builders, may not be aware of such agreements.

One revised arrangement of horizontal side handholds occurred when the Trailer Train Company decided to eliminate the vertical handhold on long bridge plates. This side handhold arrangement follows:

## Side Handholds

### 1. Dimensions:

Same as specified for flat cars, except length not less than eighteen (18) inches, and diameter not less than one (1) inch when legs are extra long.

### 2. Manner of Application:

Same as specified for "Box and Other House Cars."

### 3. Location:

One (1) over each sill step on top of rub rail projecting upward, not less than twenty-seven (27) nor more than thirty-four (34) inches above tread of sill step. Clearance at outer end should not be more than eight (8) inches from end of car.

All other safety appliances on piggy-back cars should conform to those specified for flat cars. Also, additional handholds provided to facilitate use of handbrakes, including handholds on stub bridge plates, should be retained.

Any flat car that has a low mounted side handbrake, should be equipped with a second handhold at the hand brake corner fifteen (15) to sixteen (16) inches above the handhold described previously. The tread of the sill step at this location should be widened to not less than four (4) inches and be provided with an anti-skid surface. When possible the length of such sill step should be increased to not less than fourteen (14) inches.

The additional handholds and wider sill step to facilitate the use of the low mounted side hand brake were agreed upon because of the requirement in §231.6(a)(3)(i), "Each hand brake shall be so located that it can be safely operated while the car is in motion."

The Motive Power and Equipment Inspector should become familiar with these arrangements. It is anticipated that the Safety Appliance Standards will be revised in the near future, at which time these arrangements will be incorporated into the requirements.

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