

Serious Incident Notice

Incident Description:

While the investigation of this tragic incident is ongoing, the following information is known:

On January 31, 2024, a 55-year-old engineer with 29 years of service sustained fatal injuries from an on track collision that occurred when equipment rolled out of an adjacent track and struck the locomotive he was operating in Decatur, AL.

In addition to the above, the following information is also known:

Two local assignments were performing switching operations at the same time when the incident occurred, but from opposite ends of Decatur Yard.

The fatally injured employee was working as the engineer on Local A08, while switching from the West end of the yard.

Local A80 was switching from the East end of the yard.

Safety Considerations:

Although the incident is under investigation, safety considerations in this publication should be used to elevate awareness on how to work safely in the railroad environment. Always evaluate the hazards present and apply the necessary controls to reduce risk.

Rules for Discussion:

- **OR 1 Job Safety Briefings**
- **OR 224 Hand Brakes**
- **OR 225 Hand Brake Requirements**
- **OR 229(b) Switching Operations - Stretching**
- **OR 230 Proper Understanding between Crews When Switching**
- **Division or Local Instructions for Hand Brakes and Flat Switching Requirements**

Other Material for Review:

QR code provided to access rule clarification document titled,
“Securement – Flat Switching Operations”



November 10, 2021

SECUREMENT – FLAT SWITCHING OPERATIONS

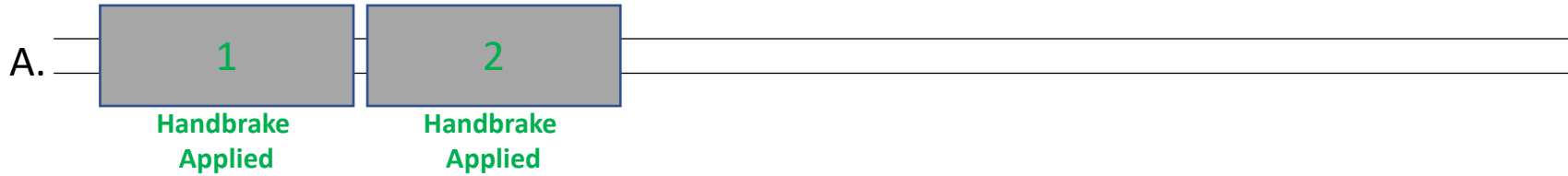
Rule Clarification

SECUREMENT – FLAT SWITCHING OPERATIONS

Introduction

- In a flat switching operation, we position a required number of rail cars at one end of the yard with the hand brakes applied to serve as blockers.
- Cars are flat switched into various tracks and sometimes they do not couple to the secured blockers in the track.
- Securement of the uncoupled cars is not required while the crew is actively flat switching and/or present on switching lead.
- If the crew leaves the switching lead, securement of the uncoupled unsecured cars is required.

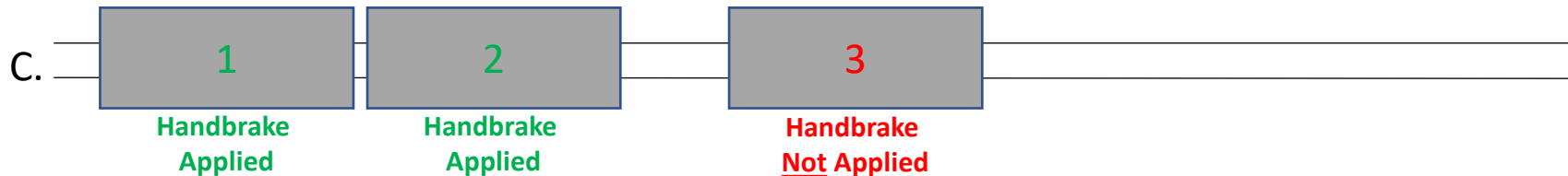
A yard job has just finished flat switching a cut of cars and has left the switching lead.
Are the below scenarios in compliance with securement rules?



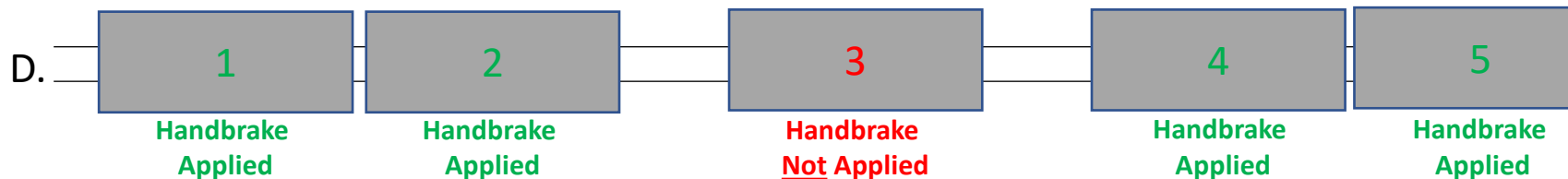
Yes. Operating Rule 225 states that when 2 cars are left standing, they must be secured with 2 handbrakes. (Unless territory or terminal specific timetable instructions supersede OR 225.)



Maybe. The cars as shown are in compliance with Operating Rule 225. A check of local territory or terminal timetable instructions would need to be made to ensure further handbrakes are not required.



No. Car 3 is not properly secured because it does not have a handbrake applied, nor is it coupled to a cut of cars with sufficient handbrakes, nor is it “bookended” on both ends by cars or cuts of cars with sufficient handbrakes.



Yes. Car 3 is properly secured. Although it does not have a handbrake applied, nor is it coupled to a cut of cars with sufficient handbrakes, it is “bookended” on both ends by cars or cuts of cars with sufficient handbrakes.

Before leaving the lead, flat switching crews need to ensure that all tracks are properly secured.

This can be done by:

1. Ensuring any cars left uncoupled in the track have sufficient handbrakes applied.
2. Ensuring any cars without handbrakes are coupled to a car or cut of cars with sufficient handbrakes.
3. “Bookending” unsecured cars on both ends of the track with cars or cuts of cars with sufficient handbrakes

224. Hand Brakes

From NS Operating Rules

(a) When an engine is to be detached, equipment left standing must be properly secured with a sufficient number of effective hand brakes. Air brakes must not be depended upon to hold cars or an unattended engine. After the engine is re-coupled, hand brakes must not be released until the air brake system is properly charged.

225. Hand Brake Requirements

From NS Operating Rules

Car(s) left standing must be secured with hand brakes as follows:

- 1 car — 1 hand brake
- 2 cars — 2 hand brakes *

***EXCEPTION:** When setting a car off on line-of-road with a defective hand brake, only 1 additional car with an effective hand brake applied will be required.

- Three or more cars — 2 hand brakes, plus a sufficient number of additional hand brakes to secure the cut of cars

NOTE: When applying brakes on cars equipped with multiple hand brakes, all hand brakes on the car must be applied and will be counted as 1 car – 1 handbrake. These instructions do not supersede Special Instructions at terminals and yards.

Unattended Equipment - equipment left standing and unmanned in such a manner that the brake system of the cars and/or locomotives cannot be readily controlled.

From NS-1