

BEST PRACTICES FOR SWITCHING EQUIPMENT TO AND FROM AMTRAK TRAINS

These bullet points for switching cars on and off Amtrak trains are compiled from safe operating practices, operating rules, the AMTRAK AMT 3, and the many years of experience of private car operators. They are an overview that can be used to form the basis of a written operational procedure that can be made available to all private car operators, Amtrak crews, and other rail switching operators that move cars to and from Amtrak trains and property. It is imperative that all applicable safety rules, operating rules, and special instructions are followed whenever rail equipment is inspected, coupled to or moved. Cars must always be secured from moving and applicable blue flag rules followed.

PRIVATE CAR OWNERS PRIOR TO MOVE

- 1) Verify all HEP, MU, and COM connectors are clean and function properly.
- 2) Have all necessary cable extensions, wire ties, HEP tool, wheel chocks, and wire cutters ready and available.
- 3) If possible, have the car air brake system charged and on air as long as possible before being taken off air to be made ready for coupling. Do not overcharge. 90 psi recommended.
- 4) Have new air brake hose gaskets available and new gaskets installed on all car air hoses.
- 5) Make sure coupler height is between 34 and 35 inches prior to day of movement. Make sure coupler operates correctly. If possible, have knuckle open.
- 6) Have marker lights turned on at rear and of car. Make sure all marker lights work.
- 7) Have a back up hose available if possible with a means of hanging it readily available.
- 8) Make sure angle cocks function easily and are easily seen by painting handles.
- 9) Make sure handbrake functions as intended and releases fully when release lever is pulled. Make sure handbrake is set when car is stationary for coupling.
- 10) Verify all dump valves and built in backup valves are all closed and in their proper operating position.
- 11) Turn off generator if possible just prior to coupling so crew can hear air leaks and so they know HEP is not live when making up HEP. If generator is running, lock out HEP feed switch and circuit breaker and positively identify HEP is not live by using a positive means such as a meter. **SERIOUS INJURY or DEATH MAY RESULT IF HEP IS NOT OFF.**
- 12) Do not use sinks or showers that may wet a train crew member while they are under the car.

- 13) Have all guests SEATED and make guests and crew aware of coupling and movements required to add or remove cars. All persons associated with the car should stay away from the crew performing the switching, except as necessary to attach or detach car. Do not allow anyone on or off the car while switching or while car is being added or removed from the train.
- 14) Have the needed traps open to allow access from one side to the other of the car.
- 15) Have prior MAP 10 inspection for out and available for the conductor.
- 16) Have the car manifest filled out and available for the conductor.
- 17) Prior to departing, get conductors cell number.
- 18) Prior to departing make sure handbrake is released. Traps and doors are closed, and markers are still displayed.

TRAIN CREW

- 1) Make sure car is secured before coupling to or uncoupling from it, including chocks and securement test if required..
- 2) When uncoupling, make sure all cables, hoses, and vestibule curtains and carpet are removed and located so they will not be damaged during switching. Check both sides.
- 3) Make sure car and/or track are clear and not protected by blue flag or derail.
- 4) When coupling, make sure knuckles are opened, couplers are centered or lined up with each other, and all cables and hoses are in position and not going to be damaged while switching.
- 5) Make sure markers and backup hoses are removed from end of train to be coupled.
- 6) Know how to unlock and lift coupler cut levers. Ask for help if unsure.
- 7) Review all AMT 3 rules if unfamiliar with Amtrak procedures before adding or removing cars.
- 8) Couple cars at 2 MPH or less. Try to not move cars while coupling, uncoupling, and stretching the couplings with handbrake and train brakes applied to avoid flat spots on the wheels. Switch carefully, especially if car or train is occupied.
- 9) If unsure about anything pertaining to the car, ask the owner or representative. They should have necessary supplies available if needed.
- 10) After coupling, connect hoses, backup hose, and cables.
- 11) Perform air test. REMEMBER CAR MAY TAKE SEVERAL MINUTES TO CHARGE IF NOT PREVIOUSLY ON AIR. If brakes do not set, most likely cause is too little charge.
- 12) Verify train line complete loop with locomotive crew and power up the HEP.
- 13) Make sure to get a cell number for the car representative or onboard crew. Collect MAP 10 and car manifest.