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December 12, 2000

Ms. Carole Washburn, Secretary  
Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission  
1300 S. Evergreen Park Dr. S.W.  
PO Box 47250  
Olympia, Washington 98504-7250

Dear Ms. Washburn:

Washington Military Department, Emergency Management Division, offers the following comments regarding the Proposed Rule Making CR-102 on Docket No. TR-981102—Railroad Operations-Rulemaking; Chapter 480-62 WAC.

New Section WAC 480-62-155 Procedure to set train speed limits. The identification of local safety hazards and the potential need for reducing train speed different than federal limits provides appropriate support for recognition of local safety hazards. Identifying the process to follow, including what would be necessary documentation of the hazard(s) supports the standards of hazard risk analysis.

New Section WAC 480-62-220 Blockage of Public Grade Crossings. Identifying in (2) that when the train blocking and upon the request of law enforcement or other emergency services personnel that it be moved in addition to when the engineer becomes aware that a crossing is being approached or is blocking the crossing with emergency vehicles, is an appropriate identification of partnership for the communities and public safety. This assumes that part of a train may be moved to accommodate passage of emergency vehicles and that there is some delegation for line staff to authorize such movement. It also assumes that if a blockage is occurring, that the local Primary Safety Answering Point (PSAP—911 Center) has been notified to appropriately route emergency vehicles. A suggestion would be for railroad companies to work with the Washington State Department of Transportation to use automated traffic condition systems that are now being implemented to distribute real time crossing information.

It should be noted that emergency vehicles and responders need to be notified through the nearest Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP), commonly referred to as a 911 dispatch center, of both planned and unplanned grade crossings that are blocked for ten (10) minutes or more. In the public safety community, saving lives are paramount and every second counts. Responders must be dispatched and aware of the most efficient and direct routes to those in need of aid. Without proper and prompt notification of crossing blockage, citizens could be at risk of further injury or death due to increased response times. This is particularly critical for medical aid response where the knowledge of route

obstructions can be relayed to response vehicles at the time of dispatch to minimize delays. Discovering that a crossing is blocked while in route causes rerouting, or dispatch of additional resources from another location, dramatically increasing times for delivery of care.

Suggested language: Blockages of grade crossings, planned or unplanned of over ten (10) minutes shall be transmitted to the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) responsible for dispatch of necessary services to the location of the grade crossing. Such notice shall include an estimate of the duration of the blockage. For blockages over thirty (30) minutes, the PSAP shall be notified when the grade crossing has been returned to normal service.

New Section WAC 480-62-225 Crossing surfaces. The wording for emergency or safety hazard repairs by the railroad company in (5)(b) provides a good option for these events. It is suggested that when a road authority plans maintenance actions such as (5) (a) and (b), notice be provided to the local PSAP administrative number or mail a notice to the office.

New Section WAC 480-62-305 Railroad community notice requirements. The wording at the beginning, identifying that the section does not include immediate safety hazards or an emergencies, clarifies that the section refers to a planned action. May want to consider in (3) if *event* should be changed to action, to be consistent within this section. Again, as part of an educational message, a reminder that the PSAPs should be notified in addition to the governing authority.

WAC 480-62-310 Accident reports. It should be noted that this assumes the railroad has contacted the local PSAP or 911 center; the state duty officer will follow up with the local 911 center to provide notification and information that has been received from the National Response Center to assist the local 911 center in identifying appropriate response (staff and equipment). The average accident notification from the National Response Center to the state Emergency Operations Center after notification by the railroad is 14 minutes. When an incident occurs, it may be multi-jurisdictional. As such, the state duty officer will coordinate notifications to appropriate agencies.

The State Enhanced 911 Office is available to talk with the railroad company representatives and WUTC regarding PSAP or 911 contact coordination. Robert Oenning, State E911 Administrator, can be reached at (253) 512-7011. Having the railroad contact the Primary Safety Answering Point (PSAP) or E911 Center responsible for the area is the fastest way to get public safety assistance. Contacting the state duty officer provides early notification to others and follow up with the PSAP for potential needed resources.

In recognizing that notification is carried out in accordance with the state's 24-hour duty officer standard procedures and the State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan indicates the coordination role, not an investigative function.

New Section WAC 480-62-999 Adoption by reference. (5) Chapter 38.52 Revised Code of Washington, cited as the ~~State Comprehensive~~ Washington Emergency Management ~~Plan Act~~, is published by the Washington state statute law committee. RCW 38.52.030 refers specifically to the State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan.

Thank you for the continued opportunity to comment on the rules regarding railroad operations and public safety. If you have any questions, please contact Joan Sterling at (253) 512-7007.