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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
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WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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As a fire commissioner, E.M.T., and fireman for Lincoln County Fire District #4, the following are for recommendations that should be part of the rules for the operation of railroads in the interest of public safety and fairness.

1. Trains must not ever stop at and block both crossings in any town. Although there have been many incidents where both crossings in Edwall have been blocked, my personal recent observations in 1999 include:

April 24 from 2:30 until 3:05 PM.	35 minutes
April 15 from 9:30 until 10:30 PM.	1 hour
February 7 from 1:30 until 1:50 PM.	20 minutes
April 19, two crossings outside of town were blocked from 6:45 until 8:35 PM.	1 hour 50 minutes. Nearly 2 hours!

On March 22, 1999, the fire department received an alarm at 11:03 am. for a fire along the B.N.S.F. right-of-way started by their equipment, 5 miles east of Edwall. Trucks left the station at 11:06 to find both crossings blocked. Our radio operator immediately contacted B.N.S.F. asking them to move the train ahead by five cars so trucks could respond. She also paged trucks from Reardan which is on the other side of the tracks, but 20 minutes away. She called B.N.S.F. three times and the crossing did not clear until 11:22, after the fire was out. Had the fire occurred during a time of high fire danger, the fire would have burned many acres before trucks could have arrived. As it was, there had been rain the day before. If the emergency had been a heart attack, the patient would have been dead.

A similar occurrence was on September 11, 1998. Trains blocked both crossings from 5:48 until 6:25 PM. When trucks were returning from a fire. All afternoon trains had been blocking for 30 minutes or more with short intervals of non-blocking in between. Luckily, the alarm was during one of those breaks. Again, our radio operator had contacted B.N.S.F. repeatedly to ask the train to not block the crossings, and nothing was done.

In emergency response cases, 5 minutes means the difference between a 5 acre or 500 acre loss of crop, pasture, or wildlife habitat. It is the

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difference between a chimney fire and a fully involved house fire. It is the difference between a defibrillated or CPR save and a DOA, reversible and irreversible shock, a bad limp or amputated leg, or, in short, dead or alive.

2. Keep right-of-ways clean.

A discarded tie works its way down streams, into fields, blocks waterways and lay in ponds for years.

A burning tie will smolder for many days.

Weeks and brush grow and dry to catch sparks from track grinding equipment and passing trains. Their weed spraying program is not sufficient. Spraying after grass and weeds have reached the "going to seed" stage does not reduce the fire danger. I would suggest returning to bulldozing a fire break as they did in the past.

3. Blow the whistle at every crossing unless city, town or county government ordains exemptions at specific crossings in the interest of "noise pollution." Most of us would rather be warned than dead.

4. Track grinding and other maintenance projects dates should be coordinated with fire districts approval. Can these projects be done November through June, rather than July through October when fire danger is high? Fire districts should at least be warned there is a hazard traveling through the district on a specific date. Remember, fire and weather conditions on the West side of the state are different from the East side.

5. Crossings, fences and safe approaches must be provided at the expense of the railroad as was originally mandated. To change any of this would be betraying the interest, trust, safety and responsibility established when they were allowed to build their business through the state and across the nation.