



APTA STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

## RAIL STANDARD

American Public Transportation Association  
1666 K Street, NW, Washington, DC, 20006-1215

APTA RT-OP-S-017-11

Published November 2011

APTA Rail Transit Standards Operating  
Practices Committee

# Electronic Device Distraction Policy

**Abstract:** This standard provides minimum electronic device distraction policy requirements for rail transit systems (RTSs) to ensure that safety-critical employees remain focused on their tasks without distraction.

**Keywords:** distraction, electronic device, mobile phone

**Summary:** Though the use of electronic devices can be helpful in many transit situations, the use of them while working in or around revenue or nonrevenue vehicles must be regulated in order to keep transit employees focused on their duties while performing safety-critical tasks. This standard provides direction as to when and where electronic devices may, and may not be used by RTS employees. Though descriptions of safe areas may vary from RTS to RTS, the intent of the meaning of safe use location remains consistent.

**Scope and purpose:** This standard applies to rail transit systems that operate rail fixed guideway systems, including shared-use systems. The standard provides minimum requirements for the use and prohibition of electronic devices for employees of RTSs operating rail vehicles or working on or around rail tracks, including RTS facilities. The standard includes personnel with responsibility for the authority over train movement or personnel fouling the right of way as established by the RTS. APTA intends this standard to prohibit the use of certain types of electronic devices as a means of eliminating unsafe distractions that have the potential to harm employees, passengers and the general public who interact with rail vehicles and equipment.

This *Rail Standard* represents a common viewpoint of those parties concerned with its provisions, namely, transit operating/planning agencies, manufacturers, consultants, engineers and general interest groups. The application of any standards, practices or guidelines contained herein is voluntary. In some cases, federal and/or state regulations govern portions of a transit system's operations. In those cases, the government regulations take precedence over this standard. APTA recognizes that for certain applications, the standards or practices, as implemented by individual transit agencies, may be either more or less restrictive than those given in this document.

© 2011 American Public Transportation Association. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form, in an electronic retrieval system or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the American Public Transportation Association.



## Participants

The American Public Transportation Association greatly appreciates the contributions of the **Rail Transit Standards Operating Practices Committee**, which provided the primary effort in the drafting of this standard.

At the time this standard was developed, the working group included the following members:

**Rudy Crespo**, *Chair*

**Charles Dziduch**, *First Vice Chair*

**Duane Sayers**, *Second Vice Chair*

Ray Abraham	Theresa Impastato
Michael Avery	Reginald Mason
William Bell	Pat McBride
Bill Capps	Harry McCall
Rudy Crespo	Pamela McCombe
Brian Dwyer	Mark Miller
Charles Dziduch	Alan Miner
Alfred Fazio	Terry Mulcahy
Larry Gaul	Dan Murphy (CTA)
Sheri Gingerich	David Murphy (CATS)
Scott Grott	David Murphy (NYCT)
Richard Hanratty	Amanda Nightingale
Gary Howard	Duane Sayers
John Humphrey	Russell Stone
Paul Jamieson	Tom Tupta
Jhaun Jasper	Denis Van Dyke
Jim Kelly	John Weber
Lynetta Leeds	David Wright
Stephen Lino	

### Project consultants

Kenneth A. Korach,  
*Transportation Resource Associates, Inc.*

Christopher Wallgren,  
*Transportation Resource Associates, Inc.*

### Project team

Charles Joseph  
*American Public Transportation Association*

# Contents

Introduction .....	iii
Note on alternate practices .....	iii
<b>1. General requirements .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Mainline operation .....	1
1.2 Operations control center, yard control tower, interlocking control tower.....	1
1.3 Roadway worker activity .....	2
1.4 Maintenance and storage facilities (shop and yard) .....	2
<b>2. Sanctioned electronic devices.....</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1 RTS issued radios.....	2
2.2 RTS authorized mobile phones .....	2
<b>3. Corrective action.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>4. References.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>5. Definitions.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>6. Abbreviations and acronymns.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>7. Document history.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>8. Summary of changes .....</b>	<b>4</b>

## Introduction

*This introduction is not part of RT-OP-S-017-11, “Electronic Device Distraction Policy.”*

This *Rail Standard* represents a common viewpoint of those parties concerned with its provisions, namely, transit operating/planning agencies, manufacturers, consultants, engineers and general interest groups. The application of any standards contained herein is voluntary. In some cases, federal and/or state regulations govern portions of a rail transit system’s operations. In those cases, the government regulations take precedence over this standard. APTA recognizes that for certain applications, the standards or practices, as implemented by individual rail transit agencies, may be either more or less restrictive than those given in this document.

With advancements in technology come the possibility that the operator of revenue or nonrevenue vehicles or an employee working around the track way will use a device in a way that will compromise his or her safety and the safety of others. Indeed, there have been accidents that have caused serious injury and death directly related to the operator of a revenue or nonrevenue vehicle being distracted while using an electronic device such as a mobile phone. Though the use of electronic devices can be helpful in many transit situations, the use of them while working in or around revenue or nonrevenue vehicles must be regulated in order to keep transit employees focused on their duties while performing safety-critical tasks.

This standard provides direction as to when and where electronic devices may, and may not be used by RTS employees. Though descriptions of safe areas may vary from RTS to RTS, the intent of the meaning of safe use location remains consistent.

## Note on alternate practices

Individual RTSs may modify the practices in this standard to accommodate their specific equipment or mode of operation. APTA recognizes that some RTSs may have unique operating environments that make strict compliance with every provision of this standard impossible. As a result, certain RTSs may need to implement the standards and practices herein in ways that are more or less restrictive than this document prescribes. An RTS may develop alternates to the APTA standards so long as the alternates are based on a safe operating history and are described and documented in the system’s safety program plan (SSPP) or another document that is referenced in the SSPP.

Documentation of alternate practices shall:

- Identify the specific APTA rail transit safety standard requirements that cannot be met;
- State why each of these requirements cannot be met;
- Describe the alternate methods used; and
- Describe and substantiate how the alternate methods do not compromise safety and provide a level of safety equivalent to the practices in the APTA safety standard (operating histories or hazard analysis findings may be used to substantiate this claim).

It must be noted that rail transit is not directly comparable to railroads. Rail transit systems differ greatly in the types of service, vehicles and technology employed, with some systems operating fully automated trains on exclusive rights-of-way and others operating on streets mixed with traffic. Rail transit demands a unique approach to solving its problems, and the APTA Rail Transit Standards Program was enacted to accomplish this complex task.

# Electronic Device Distraction Policy

## 1. General requirements

It is essential that RTS personnel be prepared for and perform their assignments in accordance with RTS policies and/or procedures. These policies and/or procedures must clearly identify what electronic devices are permitted for use, when and where their use is permitted and prohibited, and where electronic devices must be kept or stowed when their use or possession is not permitted. Once established, these policies and/or procedures must be clearly communicated to affected employees.

Each RTS shall develop an electronic device distraction policy that prohibits employees from the unauthorized use of electronic devices while operating revenue or nonrevenue vehicles. Each RTS shall develop policies for employees that prohibit the unauthorized use of electronic devices while performing certain tasks.

While each RTS shall define those tasks, the following shall be included as a minimum:

- When operating revenue and nonrevenue rail vehicles.
- While responsible for the authority over revenue and nonrevenue rail vehicle movement.
- When performing safety-critical tasks, as defined by the RTS.
- While in any location where the use of personal electronic devices will unnecessarily expose the user or others to danger.

### 1.1 Mainline operation

The RTS shall prohibit the use of electronic devices that would interfere with the safe operation of revenue or nonrevenue vehicles.

The RTS shall require mobile phones/electronic devices to be powered off and stowed off the person and out of sight while in the performance of service.

An RTS, by policy, may allow operators of rail vehicles to use mobile phones/electronic devices in an RTS-authorized situation only when the rail vehicle is stopped.

An RTS may, by policy, allow the use of mobile phones/electronic devices by operators while the operator is on a layover or break as long as it is from a safe use location defined by the RTS.

### 1.2 Operations control center, yard control tower, interlocking control tower

The unauthorized use of electronic devices shall be prohibited by any employee in direct control over train/on-track equipment movement, and/or right-of-way activity. This applies to employees in the operations control center (OCC), a yard control tower or an interlocking control tower who have direct control over train/on-track equipment movement. Electronic device earpieces of any kind shall not be worn inside the OCC, yard control tower or interlocking control tower except for an RTS-provided radio headset/microphone used specifically for the RTS radio/telephone communications system. The RTS may by policy authorize the

use of mobile phones by OCC, yard control tower or interlocking control tower personnel only in an exigent circumstance, and only for RTS business. Unauthorized electronic devices must be stowed out of sight, off the person, and must be powered off.

### **1.3 Roadway worker activity**

The use of electronic devices of any kind that would interfere with the safe performance of right-of-way maintenance and inspection activities shall be prohibited. If the use of job-related electronic devices is required, the necessary electronic device (such as, but not limited to, survey equipment, gage measuring equipment, etc.) shall be used only by properly trained personnel and only with safety precautions (established in accordance with RTS roadway worker protection policies in place.

### **1.4 Maintenance and storage facilities (shop and yard)**

The RTS shall establish safe use locations for electronic device usage at maintenance and storage facilities (shops and yards). The RTS shall prohibit the unauthorized use of electronic devices when not in an established safe use location. If job-related use of electronic devices is required, the necessary electronic device (such as, but not limited to, meters, laptops, etc.) shall be used only by properly trained personnel and only with safety precautions established in accordance with RTS equipment inspection/maintenance policies in place.

## **2. Sanctioned electronic devices**

The RTS shall develop a policy that prohibits the use of electronic devices unless such a device has been provided for the operation or has been specifically authorized for use by the RTS. The RTS policy shall specify that any electronic device should be used only when and where it is safe to do so, and should not create a distraction that could expose the employee or others to danger.

### **2.1 RTS issued radios**

RTS-issued two-way radio communication devices are designed to provide critical communications between field personnel and/or the OCC. As such, radios are exempt from the specific restrictions identified for electronic devices.

### **2.2 RTS authorized mobile phones**

An RTS may authorize mobile phone usage by RTS employees. The RTS shall develop a policy specifying the authorized uses and storage of mobile phones.

When developing a mobile phone usage policy, the RTS should consider creating a policy that addresses mobile phone usage while operating other nonrevenue motor vehicles.

## **3. Corrective action**

The RTS shall implement a compliance program for the oversight of the electronic device distraction policy in accordance with APTA RT-S-OP-011-10 “Rule Compliance.”

Corrective actions may be necessary to address employee compliance with the provisions of the RTS’s electronic device distraction policy. The RTS shall determine acceptable levels of compliance and have defined corrective actions or guidelines to address non-compliance. Corrective actions should be administered in a timely manner, commensurate with the severity of the non-compliance.

## 4. References

American Public Transportation Association, *Rail Standards*:

APTA RT-S-OP-016-10, “Roadway Worker Protection Program Requirements”

American Public Transportation Association, *Recommended Practices*:

APTA BTS-BS-RP-005-09, “Reducing Driver-Controlled Distractions While Operating a Vehicle on Agency Time”

APTA BTS-BS-RP-006-09, “Reducing Agency-Controlled Distractions While Operating a Vehicle on Agency Time”

Code of Federal Regulations, 49 CFR Part 220, Restrictions on Railroad Operating Employees’ Use of Cellular Telephones and Other Electronic Devices.

[http://www.fra.dot.gov/downloads/safety/PDF\\_Signed\\_Final\\_Rule.pdf](http://www.fra.dot.gov/downloads/safety/PDF_Signed_Final_Rule.pdf)

## 5. Definitions

**controller:** An employee, usually stationed in a control center, authorized and responsible to direct the operation of trains and activity on the mainline or in the yard.

**employee:** A person employed directly, or by contract, by an RTS.

**flagperson:** An employee designated by the RTS to direct or restrict the movement of trains past a point on a track to provide on-track safety for roadway workers.

**fouling a track:** The placement of an individual or an item of equipment in such proximity to a track that the individual or equipment could be struck by a moving train or other on-track equipment, or in any case is within a distance determined by the RTS.

**non-revenue vehicle:** A train or other rail-mounted equipment not designated to carry passengers.

**operator:** The onboard employee who controls the movement of a train or other rail mounted equipment.

**electronic device:** Electronic devices include but are not limited to:

- mobile phone devices
- music and/or photo download devices
- electronic ear devices of any kind (except prescribed hearing aids)
- headphones, ear buds or any device that projects sound
- portable computing devices
- ancillary devices associated with an electronic device

**rail transit system (RTS):** The organization that operates rail transit service and related activities. Also known as the transit system, transit agency, operating agency, operating authority, transit authority and other similar names.

**rail vehicle:** A self-propelled vehicle equipped with flanged wheels.

**revenue vehicle:** A rail transit vehicle designed to carry paying passengers.

**right-of-way:** The area at track level or above track level at a distance from the centerline of the tracks as specified by the RTS.

**safety critical:** A task that, if not performed correctly, increases the risk of damage to equipment or injury to a passenger, crew member or other person.

**safe use location:** An area away from moving rail vehicles and equipment as determined by an RTS where an employee is authorized to use an electronic device.

**supervisor:** One who oversees the activity of work or workers.

**unauthorized use:** The usage of electronic devices not directly related to the specific job duties of an individual(s) or the use of job-related electronic devices in a way that would create an unsafe condition.

**watchperson/lookout:** An employee who has been trained and qualified to provide warning to roadway workers of approaching trains or on-track equipment.

## 6. Abbreviations and acronyms

<b>APTA</b>	American Public Transportation Association
<b>OCC</b>	operations control center
<b>RTS</b>	rail transit system
<b>SSPP</b>	system safety program plan

## 7. Document history

Document Version	Working Group Vote	Public Comment/ Technical Oversight	CEO Approval	Policy & Planning Approval	Publish Date
First published	April 2010	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr 2011	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr 2011	October 2011	November 2011

## 8. Summary of changes

This section is not applicable as this is the first publication of the document.