

26. Standard for Hand-Operated Switch Machine Inspection and Maintenance

Approved October 18, 2002

APTA Rail Transit Standards Fixed Structures Inspection and Maintenance Committee

Approved September 28, 2003

APTA Rail Transit Standards Task Force

Authorized January 28, 2004

APTA Rail Transit Standards Policy Committee

Abstract: This standard provides procedures for inspecting and maintaining rail transit mainline and yard hand-operated switch machines.

Keywords: hand-operated switch machine, inspection, mainline switch machine, maintenance, switch machine, yard switch machine

Introduction

(This introduction is not a part of APTA RT-SC-S-026-03, *Standard for Hand-Operated Switch Machine Inspection and Maintenance*.)

APTA rail transit safety standards represent an industry consensus on safety practices for rail transit systems to help achieve a high level of safety for passengers, employees, and the general public. This document was created by and for those parties concerned with its provisions; namely, rail transit systems (operating agencies), manufacturers, consultants, engineers, and general interest groups. This standard provides procedures for inspecting and maintaining rail transit hand-operated switch machines.

APTA recommends this standard for:

- Individuals or organizations that inspect, maintain, and/or operate rail transit systems
- Individuals or organizations that contract with others for the inspection, maintenance, and/or operation of rail transit systems
- Individuals or organizations that influence how rail transit systems are inspected, maintained, and/or operated (including but not limited to consultants, designers, and contractors)

This standard intends to meet the following objectives:

- To ensure special life/safety equipment is operational and reliable
- To help rail transit systems incorporate safety considerations during the inspection and maintenance process
- To identify inspection criteria and maintenance standards that provide a high level of passenger and personnel safety

The application of any standards, practices, or guidelines contained herein is voluntary. In some cases, federal and/or state regulations govern portions of how a rail transit system operates. In such cases, the government regulations override any conflicting practices this document requires or recommends.

Participants

APTA greatly appreciates the contributions of the following members of the Signals and Communications Subcommittee who provided the primary effort in drafting the *Standard for Hand-Operated Switch Machine Inspection and Maintenance*:

Carlton “Don” Allen, P.E.
Sal Arceo
Gabrielle Bayme
Paul Camera

Lenny De Meyer
Michael Esford
Patrick Lavin
Ruben Madrigal

Thomas Peacock
Stephen Roberts
Carey Vaughn

The following members of the Rail Transit Standards Fixed Structures Inspection and Maintenance Committee contributed to the review and approval process of the *Standard for Hand-Operated Switch Machine Inspection and Maintenance*:

James Dwyer, Chair
Frank Cihak, Vice Chair

Anthony Adams
Carlton “Don” Allen, P.E.
Sal Arceo
Roger Avery
Peter Bertozzi
Steven Bezner, P.E.
Raymond Borge
Michael Brown
John Bumanis
Clay Bunting
R. Sean Burgess
Paul Camera
David Cappa, P.E.
Gricelda Cespedes
Robert Chappell
Frank Cihak
Catherine Cronin
Lenny De Meyer
Tom Devenny

David Dunderdale
James Dunn
James Dwyer
William Early, P.E.
Percy Erves
Michael Esford
Richard Falcon
Ray Favetti
Peter Fedun, P.E.
Steve Feil
Robert Fiore
John Gaito
Ricky Green
Mohammad Irshad
Patrick Lavin
Harry Lupia
Frank Machara
Ruben Madrigal
Michael Monastero

Bill Petit
David Rankin
Pingali Rao, P.E.
Richard Raschke
James Redding
Stephen Roberts
Charles Slavis, P.E.
Frederick Smith, P.E.
Richard Spatz
Charles Stanford
F. Brian Steets
Paul Swanson, P.E.
Steven Thompson
Fred Tijan
Gary Touryan
Carey Vaughn
James Wang, P.E.

APTA Rail Transit Standards Fixed Structures Inspection and Maintenance Committee project consultants:

Peter Gentle, P.E., *STV Incorporated*
Carol Rose, *STV Incorporated*

APTA Rail Transit Standards project team:

Gabrielle Bayme, *Standards Development Program Specialist and Project Editor*
Saahir Brewington, *Administrative Assistant and Project Editor*
Antoinette Hankins, *Program Assistant*
Thomas Peacock, *Director-Operations & Technical Services*
David Phelps, *Senior Project Manager - Rail Programs*

Contents

1. Overview	26.1
1.1 Scope.....	26.1
1.2 Purpose.....	26.1
1.3 Alternate practices	26.1
2. Definitions and acronyms.....	26.2
2.1 Definitions.....	26.2
2.2 Acronyms	26.4
3. Inspection and maintenance requirements	26.4
3.1 Inspection and maintenance frequency	26.4
3.2 Training.....	26.4
3.3 Materials	26.5
3.4 Tools	26.5
3.5 Personal protective equipment	26.6
3.6 Safety	26.6
3.7 Inspection and maintenance procedures	26.6
3.7.1 Inspection	26.6
3.7.2 Maintenance	26.7
3.8 Correction of deficiencies.....	26.9
3.9 Documentation.....	26.9
Annex A (informative) Bibliography	26.10

Standard for Hand-Operated Switch Machine Inspection and Maintenance

1. Overview

1.1 Scope

This document establishes standard requirements for inspecting and maintaining rail transit mainline and yard hand-operated switch machines.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this standard is to verify that hand-operated switch machines are operating safely and as designed through periodic inspection and maintenance, thereby increasing reliability and reducing the risk of hazards and failures.

1.3 Alternate practices

Individual rail transit systems may modify the practices in this standard to accommodate their specific equipment and mode of operation. APTA recognizes that some rail transit systems may have unique operating environments that make strict compliance with every provision of this standard impossible. As a result, certain rail transit systems may need to implement the standards and practices herein in ways that are more or less restrictive than this document prescribes. A rail transit system (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 (or another document that is referenced in the system safety program plan).

Documentation of alternate practices shall:

- a) Identify the specific APTA rail transit safety standard requirements that cannot be met
- b) State why each of these requirements cannot be met
- c) Describe the alternate methods used
- d) 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).

2. Definitions and acronyms

For the purposes of this standard, the following definitions and acronyms apply:

2.1 Definitions

2.1.1 ballast: Granular material placed in the track bed to support and restrain the track in line and surface.

2.1.2 circuit controller: A device for opening and closing electric circuits operated by a rod connected to a switch, derail, or moveable point frog.

2.1.3 cotter pin: A short strip of soft, folded metal that is inserted through a bolt head or nut to prevent rotation and/or disengagement of that bolt or nut from its connection.

2.1.4 gauge plate: Metal plates that are typically insulated, extending from rail to rail, used to maintain gauge of track.

2.1.5 hand-operated switch: A non-interlocked switch, which can only be operated manually.

2.1.6 hazard: Any real or potential condition that can cause injury, death, or damage or loss of equipment or property.

2.1.7 indication contact: A conducting part which co-acts with another conducting part to open or close an electric circuit for the purpose of providing and removing voltage to an indication device.

2.1.8 linkage: A mechanical arrangement for transferring motion in a desired manner.

2.1.9 operations control center (OCC): That facility from which train control, train dispatching, and/or train supervision takes place for the entire RTS or for specific segments of a system if there is more than one control center. *Syn:* **rail control center, rail operations center, rail service control center, train command center.**

2.1.10 original equipment manufacturer (OEM): The enterprise that initially designs and builds a piece of equipment.

2.1.11 personal protective equipment (PPE): All clothing and other work accessories designed to create a barrier against workplace hazards. Examples include safety goggles, blast shields, hard hats, hearing protectors, gloves, respirators, aprons, and work boots.

2.1.12 post maul: A large sledgehammer.

2.1.13 rail brace: A device that provides lateral support on the field side of stock rails to maintain the track gauge.

2.1.14 rail transit system (RTS): The organization or portion of an organization that operates rail transit service and related activities. *Syn:* **operating agency, operating authority, transit agency, transit authority, transit system.**

2.1.15 ring terminal: A closed loop fastener that is used to secure wire to a terminal post. *Syn:* **eyelet.**

2.1.16 slide plate: A flat plate contained in the switch layout that provides a surface for the movement of the switch points from one position to the opposite position. *Syn:* **wear plate.**

2.1.17 stock rail: The rail against which the point of a switch, derail or moveable point frog rests.

2.1.18 switch: A pair of switch points with their fastenings and operating rods providing the means for establishing a route from one track to another.

2.1.19 switch layout: A complete track assembly that includes the switch machine, the switch points, rails, frogs, and other related components.

2.1.20 switch machine: A device that performs the mechanical function of controlling the movement of switch points or a derail from one position to the other.

2.1.21 switch obstruction gauge: A thickness gauge (1/8", 1/4", 3/8") used in switch points to test adjustments of switch locking and point detector.

2.1.22 switch point: A movable tapered track rail, the point of which is designed to fit against the stock rail.

2.1.23 switch rod: A rod connecting the two points of a switch or moveable point frog, by means of which the relative distance between the points is maintained.

2.1.24 switch rod insulation: Non-conductive material used to electrically isolate the two sections of a switch rod.

2.1.25 switch throw bar: The mechanical part in a switch machine, which is driven by the main gear and which is connected to the switch throw rod. *See also:* **switch throw rod;** *Syn:* **throw bar.**

2.1.26 switch throw rod: The connecting rod that transfers motive force from the switch machine throw bar to the switch points. *See also:* **switch throw bar;** *Syn:* **throw rod, switch operating rod.**

2.1.27 tie: The transverse member of the track structure to which the running rails are fastened, which is centered on the track and designed to cushion, distribute, and transmit the stresses of traffic from the rail to the ballast. *Syn:* **crosstie.**

2.1.28 tie plate: A plate that is used to provide a bearing area for the rail base that distributes the rail vehicle load to the tie and prevents lateral movement of the rail.

2.1.29 tie strap: A steel bar used to maintain tie spacing and prevent movement.

2.2 Acronyms

OCC	operations control center
OEM	original equipment manufacturer
PPE	personal protective equipment
RTS	rail transit system

3. Inspection and maintenance requirements

3.1 Inspection and maintenance frequency

The inspection and maintenance procedures in this standard shall be performed when hand-operated switch machines are placed in service, when they are modified, repaired, or disarranged, or as otherwise deemed necessary by RTS.

The RTS shall determine the need for additional inspection and maintenance frequencies for hand-operated switch machines. A review of the following factors may be useful in making this assessment:

- OEM-recommended intervals
- Industry experience
- Operating environment/conditions
- Historical data
- Reliability-centered maintenance program development
- Failure analysis
- RTS testing and experience
- Regulatory requirements

The frequency of tasks shall comply with applicable federal, state, and local regulations.

3.2 Training

The RTS and/or their maintenance contractors shall develop and execute training programs that provide employees with the knowledge and skills necessary to safely and effectively perform the tasks outlined in this standard.

3.3 Materials

The following materials are required for inspecting and maintaining hand-operated switch machines:

- Grease gun
- Rags
- Oil can with oil
- Switch plate lubricant
- Trash bags and ties
- Scrapers
- Wire brush
- Various dusting brushes
- Lint-free cloths
- RTS-approved commercial degreaser
- RTS-approved contact cleaner
- Additional materials as required by the OEM and/or RTS

3.4 Tools

The following tools are required for inspecting and maintaining hand-operated switch machines:

- Ruler
- Multi-meter*
- Terminal nut wrench
- Post maul
- RTS-approved portable radio
- Standard tools carried by signal personnel
- Additional tools as required by the OEM and/or RTS

* Calibrate in accordance with OEM and/or RTS requirements.

3.5 Personal protective equipment

Personal protective equipment, as required by the RTS, shall be worn at all times during inspection and maintenance.

3.6 Safety

RTS established safety rules, procedures, and practices shall be followed at all times during inspection and maintenance.

3.7 Inspection and maintenance procedures

Hand-operated switch machine inspection and maintenance procedures may be modified for each rail transit system's requirements (see Section 1.3) but shall contain the steps listed in Sections 3.7.1 and 3.7.2 as a minimum.

3.7.1 Inspection

- 3.7.1.1 Notify the operations control center (OCC) and/or other authorities of the inspection activities to be performed.
- 3.7.1.2 Disable the switch operation in accordance with RTS instructions.
- 3.7.1.3 Inspect the switch machine and layout for an accumulation of debris. Remove and bag debris.
- 3.7.1.4 Inspect wayside drains for blockage or ineffective drainage.
- 3.7.1.5 Inspect the switch machine and layout for damage caused by standing water, water leaks, or retention.
- 3.7.1.6 Inspect the switch machine and layout for any condition that may interfere with the operation of the equipment. Ensure switch points and rods are clear of ballast.
- 3.7.1.7 Inspect the switch machine, and layout for damage, rust, corrosion, and missing or loose components and hardware. Inspect rod connecting pins and ensure cotter pins are in place and spread properly.
- 3.7.1.8 Inspect switch machine junction boxes and other enclosures for damage, cracks, breaks, defective latches, locks, hinges, covers, and loose, deteriorated, or damaged conduit connections, and hardware. Holes and unused entrances not used for ventilation shall be sealed.
- 3.7.1.9 Inspect polyvinyl chloride (PVC), fiberglass, rubber and other cable conduit material for damage, cracks, breaks, loose conduit connections, missing or loose components, and hardware.

- 3.7.1.10 Inspect switch points, stock rails, ties, tie plates, rail braces, switch rods, tie straps, and other associated switch layout components.
- 3.7.1.11 Inspect ties to ensure they are well tamped to withstand vibration and strain caused by passing trains.
- 3.7.1.12 Enable switch operation in accordance with RTS procedures.
- 3.7.1.13 Operate switch in both directions to ensure proper locking and indication.
- 3.7.1.14 Observe that covers and locks are in place and secured.
- 3.7.1.15 Notify the OCC and/or other authorities when inspection is complete.

3.7.2 Maintenance

- 3.7.2.1 Notify OCC and/or other authorities of the maintenance activities to be performed.
- 3.7.2.2 Remove covers from switch machine circuit controller, gearbox, and lock mechanism. Place covers in a safe area.
- 3.7.2.3 Clean accumulations of metallic particles, dirt, grease, and oil from exterior and interior of switch machine.
- 3.7.2.4 Clean areas of the switch machine where hardened deposits and/or rust are present and paint or coat with RTS-approved materials.
- 3.7.2.5 Remove excess ballast or hardened deposits of metallic particles and mud, as they could not only obstruct switch operation, but also could create dams, and in wet locations produce pools of water under and around the switch layout.
- 3.7.2.6 Clean rods in switch layout.
- 3.7.2.7 Clean and inspect switch rod insulation.
- 3.7.2.8 Clean off excessive accumulations of switch lubricant from slide plates, gauge plates, and stock rails.
- 3.7.2.9 Check for and dry any signs of moisture accumulation within switch machine compartments.
- 3.7.2.10 Inspect switch machine and layout for condition of identification plates and markers, damage, rust, corrosion, and missing or loose components and hardware including bolts, nuts, cotter pins, lock washers and screws.
- 3.7.2.11 Inspect cable, wiring, and terminal blocks for condition of wire tags, defective insulation, heat, and loose, corroded, rusted, damaged, or missing connectors and

terminals. Special attention must be given to the condition of the wires connected at the eyelet/ring terminal, excessive movement will eventually cause breakage

- 3.7.2.12** Inspect polyvinyl chloride (PVC), fiberglass, rubber and other cable conduit material for damage, cracks, breaks, loose conduit connections, missing or loose components, and hardware.
- 3.7.2.13** Inspect switch machine junction boxes and other enclosures for condition of identification plates and markers, rust, corrosion, damage, cracks, breaks, defective latches, locks, hinges, covers, weather seals, and gaskets, loose, deteriorated, or damaged conduit connections, and missing or loose components and hardware. Holes and unused entrances not used for ventilation shall be sealed.
- 3.7.2.14** Inspect junction boxes and enclosures for the presence and condition of stored circuit drawings, terminal list, and instructions.
- 3.7.2.15** Inspect associated wayside signs and hardware for proper location, visibility, damage, rust, corrosion, and missing or loose components and hardware.
- 3.7.2.16** Lubricate switch components and check lubricant levels per OEM recommendations or RTS instructions.
- 3.7.2.17** Using a hand throw lever, fully operate switch (normal and reverse) as often as necessary to perform the following:
- a) Wipe off accumulated dirt or corrosion from indication contacts.
 - b) Check for and clean any accumulation of foreign or conductive material.
 - c) Check that indication contacts, and associated cams, segments, and linkages are properly adjusted and clean. Check for excessive wear, signs of pitting, corrosion, or general deterioration.
 - d) Check the throw of the switch points. The distance between the gauge side of the stock rail and the near side of the open switch point should be 3-3/4" over the #1 switch rod. The minimum opening is 3-1/2" and the maximum opening is 4" or other distances as determined by the RTS.
 - e) Check switch throw rod to see that there is sufficient adjustment remaining.
 - f) Check adjustments of switch throw rod to balance the excess throw when each point is against its respective stock rail without excessive pressure on the points. Switch points should be adjusted to meet the rail firmly, but not under a heavy strain. Too much tension creates excessive wear in the switch machine and does not increase the safety of the switch.

- g) Check the electric lock mechanism for proper operation. Ensure all fasteners are in place and effective. Ensure electric lock rod components move freely and are not damaged.
- h) Check point detector rod to ensure the rod is securely fastened to each switch point. Ensure that all fasteners are in place and effective. Ensure the point detector rod moves freely when operated.
- i) Check for proper and smooth operation of switch machine parts and switch layout parts. Switch points should move without undue drag or spring, and ride on slide plates.
- j) Verify normal and reverse indications.
- k) Check for physical damage, excessive wear, and lost motion of switch machine and layout parts.

3.7.2.18 Perform required OEM or local RTS standard tests.

3.7.2.19 Replace covers, locks, and other equipment removed for maintenance.

3.7.2.20 Notify the OCC and/or other authorities when maintenance activities are complete.

3.8 Correction of deficiencies

Deficiencies identified during hand-operated switch machine inspection and maintenance shall be corrected and documented in accordance with OEM and/or RTS requirements.

3.9 Documentation

Inspection and maintenance activities shall be documented, reviewed, and filed in accordance with RTS procedures.

Annex A

(informative)

Bibliography

- [B1] New York City Transit, Division of Signals, Policy Instruction 11.006.2, 3.18 Switch Obstruction Test, 1987.
- [B2] American Railway Engineering and Maintenance of Way Association, Communications and Signals Manual of Recommended Practices, Part 2.4.1 Section P; Switches, Derails and Switch Operating Mechanisms. 2000.
- [B3] Original equipment manufacturer (OEM) specifications for hand-operated switch machine inspection and maintenance.
- [B4] Rail transit system (RTS) procedures for hand-operated switch machine inspection and maintenance.
- [B5] Rules and Regulations Governing Railroad and Train Control Systems, Department of Transportation Federal Railroad Administration Office of Safety, Latest Revision February 14, 2000. Interlocking Standards: 236.342 Switch Circuit Controller.
- [B6] Rules and Regulations Governing Railroad and Train Control Systems, Department of Transportation Federal Railroad Administration Office of Safety, Latest Revision February 14, 2000 Inspection and Tests: 236.382 Switch obstruction Tests.