



APTA STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

RAIL STANDARD

American Public Transportation Association

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Working Group

Electronic Device Distraction Policy Requirements

Abstract: This standard provides electronic device distraction policy requirements for rail transit systems (RTSs) to ensure that transit 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, their use must be controlled in order to keep transit employees focused on their duties while performing safety-critical tasks. This standard establishes requirements for a policy that 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. This standard also requires that each RTS must also monitor compliance and address non-compliance in accordance with the RTS electronic device distraction policy.

Scope and purpose: The intent of this standard is to control the use of electronic devices as a means of eliminating unsafe distractions that have the potential to harm employees, passengers and the general public, as well as the potential to damage RTS equipment and/or infrastructure. This standard applies to rail transit systems that operate rail fixed guideway systems, including shared-use systems. This standard requires that each RTS establish an electronic device distraction policy and monitor and enforce compliance with that policy. The policy must include prohibited and acceptable use of electronic devices in the performance of safety critical work including, but not limited to, operation of rail vehicles and authority over rail vehicle movement. It must also include provisions for those working in the RTS maintenance and storage facilities, stations, and when fouling the right of way.

This document 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. The North American Transit Services Association (NATSA) and its parent organization 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.

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Introduction

This introduction is not part of APTA RT-OP-S-017-11 Rev. 1, “Standard for Electronic Device Distraction Policy Requirements.”

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 non-revenue 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 non-revenue 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 non-revenue 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 Requirements

1. General requirements

It is essential that RTS employees be prepared for and perform their assignments in accordance with RTS policy. The RTS may address some provisions of this standard outside of a policy and instead in a rule or procedure. This policy must clearly identify what electronic devices are permitted for use, when and where their use is permitted and prohibited, and where and how electronic devices must be kept or stowed when their use or possession is not permitted. The RTS shall communicate this policy to affected employees and receive acknowledgment in accordance with RTS requirements.

The RTS shall develop an electronic device distraction policy that prohibits employees from the unauthorized use of electronic devices while operating revenue and/or non-revenue rail vehicles. Each RTS shall develop policies for employees that prohibit the unauthorized use of electronic devices while performing safety critical tasks and when in certain locations.

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

- When operating revenue and non-revenue rail vehicles.
- While responsible for the direct control over revenue and non-revenue rail vehicle movement.
- When performing any other safety-critical tasks, as defined by the RTS.
- While fouling the right of way, in maintenance and storage facilities, and any other location where the use of electronic devices will unnecessarily expose the user or others to a potential hazardous condition.

The RTS shall determine other issues related to electronic device distraction that should be identified within its electronic device distraction policy.

1.1 Mainline operation

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

The RTS shall require electronic devices to be powered off and stowed off the person and out of sight while operating revenue or non-revenue rail vehicles.

An RTS, by policy, may allow operators of revenue and non-revenue rail vehicle to use electronic devices in an RTS-authorized situation only when the rail vehicle is stopped.

An RTS may, by policy, allow the use of 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 Employees who direct revenue and non-revenue rail vehicle movement

The RTS shall prohibit the unauthorized use of electronic devices by any employee in locations including, but not limited to operations control center (OCC), a yard control tower or an interlocking control tower and who is in direct control over revenue and non-revenue rail vehicle movement, and/or right-of-way activity.

Electronic device earpieces of any kind shall not be worn inside the OCC, yard control tower or interlocking control tower except for an RTS-approved radio headset/microphone used specifically for the RTS communications system.

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

The RTS shall identify requirements related to the stowage and/or usage of electronic devices.

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, gauge measuring equipment, etc.) shall be used only by properly trained personnel and only with safety precautions supporting the use of electronic device in a safe use location (established in accordance with RTS roadway worker protection policies in place).

1.4 Stations, yards, and maintenance facilities

The RTS shall establish safe use locations for electronic device usage within stations, yards, and maintenance facilities. 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.

1.5 Other vehicles

An RTS may, by policy, prohibit the use of electronic devices by employees while operating other RTS vehicles, as defined by the RTS.

2. Authorized 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 by the affected employee 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 two-way radios

RTS-issued two-way radio communication devices are designed to provide critical communications between field employees, supervisors, and/or the OCC. As such, two-way 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.

3. Rule compliance program

The RTS shall implement a compliance program for the oversight of the electronic device distraction policy in accordance with the provisions of APTA RT-OP-S-011-10 Rev 1 “*Rule Compliance Program Requirements.*”

Related APTA standards

Electronic Device Distraction Policy Requirements contains information that is directly related to other APTA Standards and Recommended Practices. The following Standards and Recommended Practices contain information directly related to subjects within this Policy.

- **APTA RT-S-OP-011-10 Rev 2** “Rule Compliance Program Requirements”
- **APTA RT-S-OP-016-10 Rev 1** “Roadway Worker Protection Program Requirements”
- **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”

References

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

Definitions

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

- mobile phone devices
- electronic wearable devices, such as smart watches, which transmit any information or communications in addition to date or time
- 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
- any future devices known by other names and serving other purposes that may distract from safe working practices

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

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 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 revenue and non-revenue rail vehicle 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.

Abbreviations and acronyms

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| APTA | American Public Transportation Association |
| NATSA | North American Transit Services Association |
| OCC | operations control center |
| RTS | rail transit system |
| SSPP | system safety program plan |

Summary of changes

- Changed title to “Electronic Device Distraction Policy Requirements”
- Modified language to apply the Electronic Device Distraction Policy to revenue and non-revenue rail vehicles
- Updated definition of “electronic device” to include electronic wearable devices and any future device that could distract from safe operation
- Modified section 1.4 to cover stations, yards, and maintenance facilities
- Added section 1.5 on other RTS vehicles
- Changed section 2 to “Authorized electronic devices”
- Changed section 2.1 to “RTS issued two-way radios” to address communication between operating personnel and those who control revenue and non-revenue rail vehicle movement
- Replaced section 3 “Corrective action” with “Rule compliance program”
- Referenced APTA Standard “Rule Compliance Program Requirements”
- Updated working group membership
- Removed definitions of terms no longer referenced in the Standard
 - a) “Controller”
 - b) “Flagperson”
 - c) “Watchperson/lookout”
 - d) “Train”

Document history

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