



GUIDE TO THE  
FEDERAL RAILROAD  
ADMINISTRATION  
**QUIET ZONE RULE**



# WHY DO TRAINS SOUND THEIR HORNS?

Put simply, trains sound their horns to warn motorists and pedestrians that a train is coming. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has very specific requirements as to when, where, how long and how loud a train must sound its horn.

The FRA Train Horn Rule (49 CFR 222) requires the engineer to sound the horn under various circumstances including when a train is approaching and passing through a public highway-rail grade crossing.

According to FRA rules, train horns must:

- be within 96 and 110 decibels, a sound level equivalent to that of a lawnmower
- be sounded at least 15 seconds but no more than 20 seconds before reaching a crossing
- be sounded no more than a quarter of a mile from a crossing if the train is traveling faster than 60 mph
- be sounded approaching persons on or near the track
- be sounded while moving through tunnels

In addition, CSX Operating Rules require trains to sound horns when:

- approaching or passing passenger trains or stations
- approaching or passing roadway or railroad workers
- approaching tunnels

# WHAT IS A QUIET ZONE?

A quiet zone is an FRA exemption to the rule requiring trains to sound their horns when approaching public highway-rail grade crossings.

A quiet zone may be a section of rail line at least one-half mile in length that contains one or more consecutive public grade crossings or a single public grade crossing at which locomotive horns are not routinely sounded.

*To locate existing quiet zones throughout the United States, visit the FRA website at [www.fra.dot.gov](http://www.fra.dot.gov) and type "quiet zone locations" in the search box.*

What to expect within a quiet zone:

- Upgraded warning devices and additional safety measures installed at grade crossings.
- Train horns may still sound. Quiet zones only prohibit horns to be routinely sounded as a train approaches a grade crossing. Train crews can still sound horns in emergency situations or for other safety reasons.
- The community requesting the quiet zone is responsible for funding the installation of additional safety measures which may cost in excess of \$200,000 per crossing.



## HOW DO I ESTABLISH A QUIET ZONE IN MY COMMUNITY?

Citizens who would like to establish quiet zones should contact their local public agency. Only a public agency may request a quiet zone and initiate the establishment process.

The establishment of a quiet zone falls under the authority of the FRA. During the process, CSX provides feedback regarding safety and other rail-related concerns. A CSX-approved General Engineering Consultant will work with your community during the establishment process.

CSX cannot prohibit the creation of an FRA-approved quiet zone.

# PROCESS OVERVIEW

1. Communities wishing to establish a quiet zone should first contact their local FRA Crossing Manager.

FRA Crossing Manager contact information can be found by visiting the FRA website at [www.fra.dot.gov](http://www.fra.dot.gov) and typing “regional offices” in the search box.

2. Public agency determines which crossings comply with FRA guidelines and completes calculation of Quiet Zone Risk Index (QZRI).
3. Public agency completes CSX’s Quiet Zone Data Form and submits it along with a \$6000 advanced deposit.
4. Public agency, FRA and CSX General Engineering Consultant (GEC) perform a diagnostic review of the selected crossings.
5. Notice of Intent (NOI) is sent to CSX, FRA and state DOT, each via Certified Mail. Send CSX NOI to: CSX Transportation, Inc., Director Project Management-Public Projects, 500 Water St. J-301, Jacksonville, FL 32202
6. CSX reviews NOI and provides feedback to public agency.
7. Public agency enters into Preliminary Engineering Agreement with CSX.

For more information about the preliminary engineering process please visit [www.csx.com](http://www.csx.com), About Us, Property and then Public Project Manual.

8. Public agency and/or CSX installs appropriate Supplemental Safety Measures (SSMs) and the road authority installs applicable signage at the affected crossings.
9. Notice of Establishment (NOE) is sent to CSX, FRA, and state DOT each via Certified Mail. Send CSX NOE to: CSX Transportation, Inc., Director Project Management-Public Projects, 500 Water St. J-301, Jacksonville FL 32202
10. CSX visits affected crossings to confirm installation of SSMs and then provides NOE response to the public agency.

Additional information can be found  
by visiting the FRA website,  
[www.fra.dot.gov](http://www.fra.dot.gov),  
and typing “guide to the quiet zone  
establishment process” in the search box.