

Guidelines for the Use of Exempt Signs at Railroad Crossings in Michigan

Exempt signs may be utilized at railroad crossings with the consent of the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). A road authority or railroad desiring to utilize Exempt signs shall submit a request to the MDOT Rail Safety Section for a Diagnostic Study Team Review (DSTR) of the crossing. Railroads will be required to stop and flag crossings utilizing Exempt signs.

The operating railroad will have an opportunity to share any concerns it has during the DSTR. Every railroad crossing has a unique crossing environment and will be evaluated on a case by case basis. MDOT has the right to deny a request for a DSTR if it believes it is unnecessary or not warranted.

Crossing conditions that may qualify the use of exempt signs

- Crossings with tracks that have been severed or removed on both sides of the crossing.
- Abandoned crossings waiting to be removed.
- Inactive crossings (track not in use).
- Crossings used specifically for rail car storage.

Exempt signs may not be practical for crossings with the following conditions

- Crossings over multi-lane roadways with higher traffic speeds.
- Crossings with regular rail service of four or more trains per month.
- Crossings with numerous shipments of hazardous materials.
- High volume roadways that would be difficult to stop and flag.
- Crossings with long crossing surfaces that would be hazardous to stop and flag.
- Crossings adjacent to an active crossing.

Guidance for Active Crossings

The railroad may choose to leave the warning devices active to help protect the railroad employees if the crossing is still being used. They may also elect to use only the island circuit to help alleviate rusty rail conditions in the approaches.

Placement of Exempt Signs

At passive crossings, Exempt signs (R15-3) may be installed below the crossbuck or number of tracks plaque, or on an independent post within close-proximity to the crossing. Exempt signs may be installed on the warning device masts (with railroad permission) or on an independent post within close-proximity to the crossing. The supplemental Exempt sign (W10-1a) should be used below the Advance Warning Sign.

