

Required Train Horn Signals

The following are the required horn signals listed in the operating rules of most North American railroads, along with their meanings. Signals are illustrated by an "o" for short sounds, and "-" for longer sounds. (Note that these signals and their indications are updated to reflect modern practice.) Those rules marked with an asterisk (*) must be sounded when and/or where applicable. Those signals without an asterisk convey information to employees; they must be used when voice communication is not available.

Rule	Sequence	Indication ^[9]
14 (a)	o	Applying air brakes while standing.
14 (b)	* --	Proceeding. Releasing air brakes.
14 (f)	* o o -	Acknowledging a flagman's stop signal.
14 (g)	* o o	Acknowledging any signal not otherwise provided for.
14 (h)	* o o o	Backing up.
14 (j)	o o o o	Calling for signals.
14 (l)	* -- o -	<p>1. Trains or engines approaching public highway grade crossings shall sound the horn at least 15 seconds, but no more than 20 seconds before the lead engine enters the crossing. Trains or engines travelling at speeds greater than 45 mph shall begin sounding the horn at or about, but not more than, one-quarter mile (1,320 feet) in advance of the nearest public crossing. Even if the advance warning provided by the horn will be less than 15 seconds in duration. This signal is to be prolonged or repeated until the engine or train occupies the crossing; or, where multiple crossing are involved, until the last crossing is occupied. 2. Approaching tunnels, yards, or other points where railroad workers may be at work. 3. Passing standing trains.</p>
14 (m)	* o	Approaching passenger station.
14 (o)	o -	Inspect train for a leak in brake pipe system or for brakes sticking.
14 (p)	* Succession of sounds	Warning to people and/or animals.
14 (q)	* - o	When running against the current of traffic: 1. Approaching stations, curves, or other points where view may be obscured: and 2. Approaching passenger or freight trains and when passing freight trains.

Exception: Engine horn signals required by rules 14 (b) and 14 (h) do not apply after momentary stops in continuous switching movements.