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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE**

Working Party on Road Traffic Safety

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Item 6 (c) of the provisional agenda

**REVISION OF THE CONSOLIDATED RESOLUTION  
ON ROAD TRAFFIC (R.E.1)**

**Driving at level-crossings**

**Note by the secretariat**

1. This document is submitted in accordance with the terms of reference of the Working Party (WP.1) as set out in document TRANS/WP.1/100/Add.1, paragraph 1 (c), which are aimed at developing, updating and circulating Consolidated Resolutions R.E.1 and R.E.2, and with the programme of work for 2008-2012 of the Inland Transport Committee, adopted at its seventieth session, in 2008 (ECE/TRANS/200/Add.1, section 02.3 (b)).
2. Members of WP.1 will find below a draft prepared by Laser Europe on safety at level-crossings, following discussions held on this subject at the fifty-fifth session (see report, ECE/TRANS/WP.1/117, para. 11). This point will be inserted as paragraph 1.9 in chapter 1 of the new R.E.1.

**R.E.1****Chapter 1 General rules concerning behaviour in traffic**

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**1.9 Safety at level-crossings****1.9.1 Context**

A level-crossing is an intersection between a rail line and a roadway or pedestrian walkway. There are still tens of thousands all over the world. Rail traffic always has the right of way over road users. It is precisely because these crossings are level that they involve serious risks, notwithstanding the signals warning of their presence (see the danger warning signs prescribed under annex 1, section A, paragraphs 25, 26, 28 and 29, of the 1968 Vienna Convention on Road Signs and Signals) and, in some instances, the protective barriers or half-barriers preventing road users from crossing when one or more trains are approaching or passing through. Generally, given the difference in mass between a train and a road vehicle, it is the road vehicle that is basically at risk. However, a collision with a heavy goods vehicle can have serious consequences for rail traffic, especially if the truck is carrying hazardous or flammable goods.

Despite all the measures taken to signal level-crossings and make them safe many road users are killed or injured at such crossings every year, because they fail to observe the rules or they are careless (failing to observe mandatory stop lights or audible alarms, for example, or venturing onto a level-crossing without first making sure that no rail traffic is approaching), or else they drive through or around the barriers or half-barriers. Contrary to what is generally thought, most accidents involve “regulars”, in particular those living near a level-crossing, as habit makes them less careful or more reckless, which may prove fatal.

The risk potential of a level-crossing is a function of the traffic densities on the road and the railway. Generally speaking, most level-crossings are located either where railways cross low-traffic roads, or on secondary railway lines. Still, in order to reduce the risk of collision at level-crossings, countries are making efforts to remove them, starting with the ones where the risk is highest, either by replacing them with split level-crossings or simply doing away with them. This is, however, a long-term undertaking because of the cost involved and the relatively long study and implementation times (about five years). Also, the topography of the sites does not always lend itself to such a solution.

## 1.9.2 Recommendations

In the light of the foregoing, the following measures are recommended:

### 1.9.2.1 Rules to observe when approaching and going through a level-crossing

#### (a) Rules of behaviour

All countries with rail networks should introduce into their legislation the provisions of article 19 of the 1968 Vienna Convention on Road Traffic, which establishes the rules to be followed by all road users, whether pedestrians, cyclists, moped or motorcycle riders, or drivers of motor vehicles with four or more wheels, when approaching and going through level-crossings.

It is also recommended to supplement these rules with stricter provisions for buses and coaches, which should be obliged to stop at level-crossings not equipped with automatic warning devices such as barriers, half-barriers or flashing lights. School buses should be obliged to stop at level-crossings, whether or not they are equipped with barriers, half-barriers or flashing lights.

#### (b) Rules for overtaking

Similarly, countries should introduce into their legislation the provisions of article 11, paragraph 8, of the Vienna Convention on Road Traffic, which sets out the rules for overtaking just before and on level-crossings. They should ideally also introduce the provisions contained in the 1971 European Agreement Supplementing the 1968 Convention on Road Traffic, which are stricter.

Additionally, to ensure greater safety, countries should prohibit road users from stopping after the level-crossing sign (see, for example, signs A, 28<sup>a</sup> and A, 28<sup>b</sup>, in the Vienna Convention on Road Signs and Signals) when a train is approaching the crossing.

### 1.9.2.2 Road-user awareness

Countries should also make road users aware of the dangers of such level-crossings, through information campaigns, emphasizing the importance of observing the rules in paragraph 1.8.1, for their own safety.

Over and above these rules, the following advice should be given to each category of road user.

- (a) *Pedestrians*: Do not walk along the railway, avoid walking on the rails, which may be slippery, and do not walk along the railway from the level-crossing to get to the station platform.
- (b) *Cyclists*: Always cross the track at right angles to the rails.

(c) *Drivers of motor vehicles:*

- Avoid changing gear when crossing the tracks;
- Never race a train.

(d) *Drivers of goods vehicles:* more specifically:

- Get to know the level-crossings on your routes;
- Be well aware of your vehicle's dimensions and load to be sure that it will have sufficient space to fully clear the track and get across safely;
- Avoid crossing a railway if there is a risk that the vehicles could get caught against a raised barrier.

1.9.2.3 Infrastructure and equipment

No level-crossing should be located on high-traffic thoroughfares (motorways and similar roads) or on railways where speeds can exceed 160 km/h.

Automatic level-crossings should be equipped with a flashing red light, which requires vehicles to come to a complete stop, accompanied by a bell, and signalled in advance by appropriate signs that will vary depending on whether or not the level-crossing has barriers. In some countries, the threshold for installing automatic lights is 100 vehicles per day.

For greater safety, level-crossings can be fitted with radars to allow automatic checks. Radars make it possible to photograph and penalize any driver who goes through the level-crossing after activation of the light signals prohibiting passage. Some countries are considering the possibility of putting radar into general use.

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