



EARLY WARNING

Wednesday, September 27, 2006

C-10355
EW-5214

Subject: Revisions to AAR Open Top Loading Rules Manual, Section 5, Packaged Lumber Products: Figures 54, 54-A and 54-B Restrictions on Longitudinal Void Space

To: MEMBERS AND PRIVATE CAR OWNERS

File Number: LR-2.8.108

In recent years, bulkhead flat cars equipped with center partitions and tie down cables or straps, have become the primary car of choice for shipment of forest products. Using loading Figures 54, 54-A and 54-B, these freight cars, commonly referred to as "centerbeams" have resulted in cost savings for shippers and reduced the number of shifted loads and enroute set-outs.

While these cars represent an improvement over previous loading methods, one problem has been the telescoping of lumber products from the top packages in the load adjacent to a void space when the top layer is not completely filled with packages. In 2003, Circular Letters c-9681 and c-9767 announced the application of either a fencing-type mesh, plastic or wire (e.g. poultry wire or snow fencing), over the void end of each package adjacent to the void. These circulars also authorized the use of transportation-type package wrap as an acceptable substitute. Both of these methods were tested on the Vibration Test Unit at the Transportation Technology Center in Pueblo, CO.

A member railroad has reported that a piece of lumber telescoped out of a top layer package with plastic snow fencing and struck a locomotive moving in the opposite direction. Follow-up inspections of other loads found a number of cases where the snow fencing material had failed to prevent telescoping. A report has also been received of lumber telescoping through transportation-type package wrap and striking a locomotive.

This Early Warning is assigned **Severity Code 06-AAR** defined under the provisions of AAR Interchange Rule 125. Pending additional review and/or testing of the methods mentioned above, the OTLR Committee voted to *immediately eliminate the use of plastic snow fence, chicken wire mesh, and transportation-type package wrap as methods to prevent telescoping. The compression package band method as shown in the attachment to this circular is now the only acceptable method to prevent telescoping.* Figures 54 and 54-A, are now restricted to a maximum void space between top layer packages of no more than four feet unless the top packages on both sides of the void have a compression package band

applied. Figure 54-B is similarly restricted for voids greater than two feet. A top layer package is defined as any package with no package loaded directly above. A package that is not "fully" covered by a package above, will also be considered a top package and is required to have a compression package band applied. (See detail B). Where customer requirements mandate the use of package wrap, the compression package band must be applied over the package wrap.

The attached revisions to Figures 54, 54-A, and 54-B will be reflected in the next issue of the *AAR Open Top Loading Rules Manual*. In the interim, kindly insert this Circular in your copy of Section 5 of the OTLR Manual and be governed accordingly.

Note: Carriers should bring this information to the immediate attention of any customers using these loading figures.

The Open Top Loading Rules Committee is aggressively pursuing other solutions to this problem and is open to suggestions from interested parties. Please contact Mr. Charles Powell Senior Manager of Open Top Loading Rules and Equipment Standards of TTCL at 719.585.1883 or email at cpowell@aar.com for additional information.

Sincerely,
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Safety & Operations

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