



# Illinois Department of Transportation

2300 South Dirksen Parkway / Springfield, Illinois / 62764

October 8, 2014

## **CIRCULAR LETTER 2014-19**

### **SNOW REMOVAL NEAR RAILROAD CROSSINGS**

COUNTY ENGINEERS/SUPERINTENDENTS OF HIGHWAYS  
MUNICIPAL ENGINEERS/DIRECTORS OF PUBLIC WORKS

This circular letter is intended to relay safety concerns regarding snow removal near railroad crossings. The major concerns include piling snow under the gate arm mechanism, in locations that reduce visibility to oncoming trains, and in locations that restrict entrance to railroad access roads.

Snow plow operators should be reminded to avoid piling any snow near the gate arm mechanism at a railroad crossing. Snow piled around this mechanism may prevent the gate arm from fully descending into the active warning position to alert motorists of an oncoming train. Additionally, snow piled up in the vicinity of railroad crossings can obstruct the view of oncoming trains. We ask that where possible, snow plow operators avoid piling snow on or near railroad crossings and on access roads parallel and adjacent to railroad tracks.

Another related concern involves the malfunction of railroad signal systems due to excessive applications of roadway de-icing materials. Salts and chemicals applied directly on or very near the railroad crossing area can reduce the resistance properties of the ties and ballast over time. This can produce conditions where electrical signals carried through the rails will short out, resulting in false activations of the railroad signal system. Once this condition occurs, the railroad crossing surface, ties, and ballast must be completely removed and replaced with clean materials.

Finally, it should be noted that snow removal operations over railroad crossings can cause physical damage to the railroad crossing surface. Plowing over the top of, and too close to the surface over railroad crossings, can cause damage such as dislodging of crossing planks, or the rail from the ties, which may lead to a train derailment. Whenever possible, snow plow blades should be raised slightly when plowing over a railroad crossing.

Your efforts to address these concerns during winter roadway snow and ice removal activities will help improve safety for motorists in Illinois.

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Please contact the BLRS Local Policy unit at [DOT.LocalPolicy@illinois.gov](mailto:DOT.LocalPolicy@illinois.gov) with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James K. Klein". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

James K. Klein, P.E., S.E.  
Acting Engineer of Local Roads and Streets

TW/

cc: Mike Stead, Illinois Commerce Commission