



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Railroad
Administration**

Memorandum

Date: June 15, 1998

Reply to Att. of: MP&E 98-51

Subject: Definition of Left and Right

From: Edward R. English
Director, Office of Safety Assurance and Compliance

To: Regional Administrators, Deputy Regional Administrators,
Motive Power & Equipment Specialists and Inspectors

The purpose of this bulletin is to provide Railroad Safety Inspectors with the position the Federal Railroad Administration has adopted, as a result of an MP&E Technical Resolution Committee interpretation, for determining and reporting the location of non-complying and/or defective railroad car components. The definition of “left” and “right” is defined in §231.19 ,

“Right or Left refers to the side of person when facing end or side of car from ground”

This bulletin further identifies the “A” and “B” end of the car from which the definition will be applied and provides additional guidance for uniformly identifying various components on a car.

The railroad industry’s generally established and accepted practice for determining the location of applicable components on rail cars equipped with four, six, or eight wheel trucks is as follows:

- C The **“B” end** of a car is determined by the location of the hand brake. The end of the car on which the hand brake is located is the **“B” end**. The opposite end of the car is known as the **“A” end**. On cars equipped with hand brakes on both ends, the **“A”** and **“B”** end shall be determined as stencilled.
- C When facing the **“B” end** of the car, the car is divided into four sections known as **BR**, **BL**, **AR**, and **AL**. The order of applicable components on the right side of the car shall be known as **R1**, **R2**, **R3**, etc... The order of applicable components on the left side of the car shall be known as **L1**, **L2**, **L3**, etc... See Figure A.

- Beginning at the "B" end of the car, brake beams shall be numbered consecutively, see Figure B

The railroad industry's generally established and accepted practice for determining the location of applicable components on articulated and multi-level cars is as follows:

- The "B" end of the car is determined by the location of the hand brake. The end of the car on which the hand brake is located and stenciled as "B end", is the "B" end. The end unit opposite the "B" end, is the "A" end. The unit adjacent to the "B" end will be known as the "C" unit and each additional unit will be stenciled consecutively and alphabetically from the "B" end toward the "A" end, see Figure C. For cars equipped with multiple hand brakes, report the unit location.
- When facing the "B" end of the car, the right side is known as the "R" side and the left side is known as the "L" side. Wheel sets and applicable components will be numbered consecutively from the "B" end to the "A" end, 1 through 9. Applicable components above 9 will be identified alphabetically in reverse order from Z (e.g., Z, Y, X, W, etc.) until the last wheel set on the "A" unit is identified, see Figure C.

The above guidance should be applied when reporting the location of applicable non-complying components under the provisions of Parts 215, 231 and 232. It can also be applied to passenger cars unless the passenger railroad utilizes some other generally accepted method of identifying the location of passenger car components (e.g., No. 1 end, No. 2 end, etc.).



Figure A

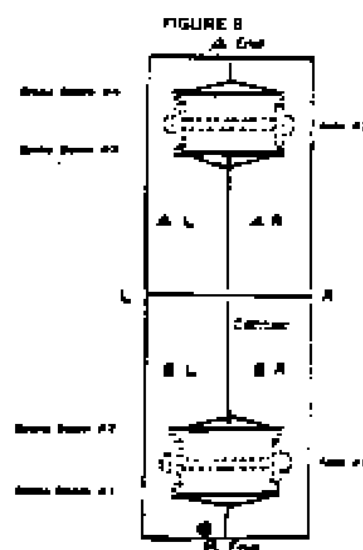


Figure B

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FIGURE C

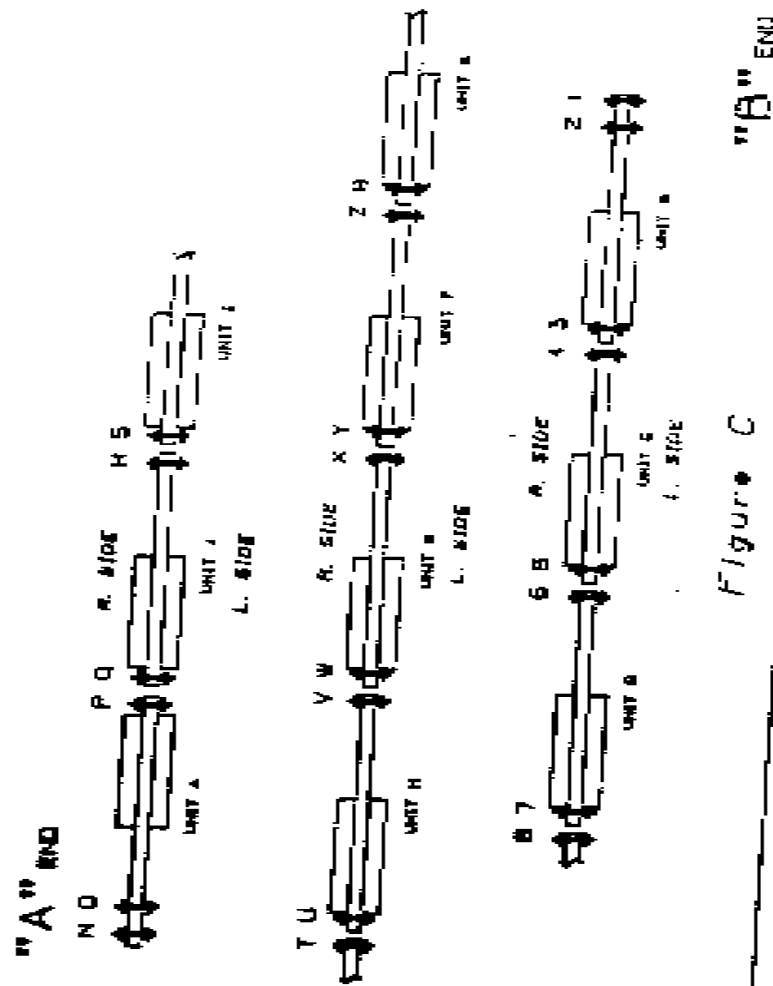


Figure C "B" END