

CHAPTER 813
CLOSE-CLEARANCE WARNING SIGNS ALONG RAILROAD TRACKS

Chapter rescission date pursuant to Iowa Code section 17A.7: 5/20/31

761—813.1(327F) General.

813.1(1) *Applicability.*

- a. This chapter implements Iowa Code section 327F.13.
- b. This chapter applies to railroad companies as well as industries, agricultural cooperatives or other entities that are owners of a railroad track, and this chapter applies to individuals who are owners of a railroad track.

813.1(2) *Contact information.* Information regarding this chapter is available from the Modal Transportation Bureau, Iowa Department of Transportation, 800 Lincoln Way, Ames, Iowa 50010; or by telephone, 515.239.1140.

813.1(3) *Definitions.*

“Close clearance” means a permanent or temporary situation where an obstruction near a railroad track physically impedes a person who is lawfully riding the side of a train from clearing the obstruction.

“Obstruction” means a building, machinery (other than equipment designed for operation on a railroad track when actually located on a railroad track), tree, brush or other object.

“Owner” means the railroad company, industry, agricultural cooperative, other entity or individual that holds a fee simple title, easement, leasehold, contract to purchase, license or other legal or equitable interest or right in the railroad track and is in primary possession and control of the railroad track.

“Tangent track” means a track segment without any curves.

[ARC 0218D, IAB 4/15/26, effective 5/20/26]

761—813.2(327F) Close-clearance dimensions. Close clearance for a tangent track is a location along the railroad track where there is an obstruction that falls within the following dimensions: starting at the centerline of track at top of rail and extending 5 feet both sides horizontally and level therewith, thence upward vertically 15 inches, thence upward diagonally to a point 4 feet above top of rail and 8 feet laterally from centerline of track, thence vertically to a point 20 feet above top of rail, thence diagonally to a point 6 feet from centerline of track and 22 feet above top of rail, thence horizontally to centerline of track. Vertical clearance is to be 18 feet above top of rail at the entrance to and inside buildings. On curved track, clearances on each side of the track centerline are to be increased 1½ inches per degree of curvature (Figure 1).

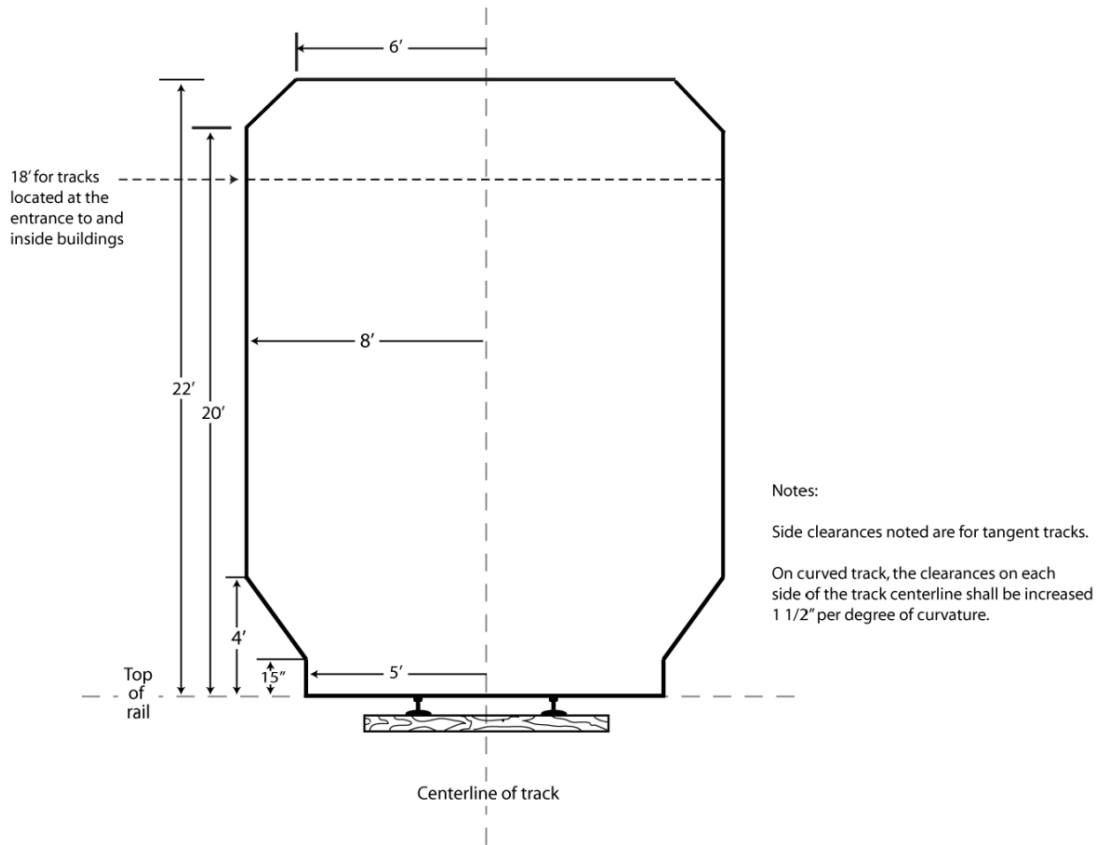


Figure 1

[ARC 0218D, IAB 4/15/26, effective 5/20/26]

761—813.3(327F) Signing standards.

813.3(1) A close-clearance warning sign or signs are necessary at all locations where there is close clearance. It is the responsibility of the owner to ensure that all close-clearance locations have warning signs in accordance with this chapter and Iowa Code section 327F.13.

813.3(2) If an obstruction creating a close-clearance situation is a temporary or nonpermanent obstruction, in lieu of signage, the owner may remove the obstruction or remove the track from service until the obstruction is removed.

813.3(3) A close-clearance warning sign is to comply with the following:

- a. Include the words "no clearance." The letters must be black on a white reflective background and be a minimum of three inches high.
- b. Be a vertical sign not less than 42 inches in height and 4 inches in width.
- c. Be placed at least one foot off the ground or on the obstruction and within three feet of the close-clearance location or on the obstruction. Signs are to be located on both sides of the obstruction so as to be visible from both directions.
- d. Not be within eight feet of the centerline of the tracks.

813.3(4) In the event that the placement of the close-clearance warning sign according to paragraph 813.3(3) "c" or "d" does not provide adequate notice for a person who is lawfully riding the side of a train to prepare for the close clearance (such as a curve or other sight obstruction), an additional sign reading "no clearance ahead" is to be placed in a location that provides adequate notice to the person who is lawfully riding the side of the train so that the person may prepare for the close clearance. Depending on the particular environment that makes an additional no clearance ahead sign necessary, a no clearance ahead sign may be needed on one or on both sides of the obstruction so as to be visible from both directions.

813.3(5) In the event that the physical environment prevents the placement of a warning sign in accordance with paragraph 813.3(3) “c” or “d,” the sign is to be placed in a highly visible location that is clearly indicative of the point of close clearance. An alternative size and shape of sign may be used if there is no location available where a standard size and shape sign may be used. Any alternative sign must clearly be identifiable as an indicator of the close-clearance situation.

813.3(6) In limited situations where multiple instances of insufficient clearance occur within a confined area or over a distance, and where posting of multiple warning signs could on its own be a safety hazard, or where multiple signs would create a confusing environment, making it difficult to discern the areas that lack clearance, a sign reading “no clearance ahead” may be posted in lieu of multiple signs.

813.3(7) A line or other marker is to be maintained at a distance of eight feet from the centerline of the track on all platforms, excluding passenger platforms, to indicate the space along the edge of such platform that is to be kept clear of merchandise, material or other articles that could create a temporary close-clearance situation.

[ARC 0218D, IAB 4/15/26, effective 5/20/26]

761—813.4(327F) Enforcement.

813.4(1) If the owner is provided written notice by an employee, a person working on or near the tracks or a railroad inspector that a location is in need of a close-clearance warning sign, the owner is to investigate and, if warranted, ensure the placement of a warning sign or signs within 30 calendar days of notification. If a close-clearance warning sign is not warranted, the owner is to inform the person who provided notice, in writing within 30 calendar days, that a sign is not warranted and explain why the location does not need a close-clearance warning sign.

813.4(2) If the owner fails to respond to a written notice by an employee or another person working on or near the tracks or if the employee or other person disagrees with the owner’s determination that a warning sign is not warranted, the employee or other person may notify the department. The department will investigate and make a determination if the location warrants the placement of a close-clearance warning sign.

a. If the department determines a close-clearance warning sign is warranted, the department will notify the owner in writing. The owner shall have 14 calendar days from the date of the notification to install the proper warning sign. Failure to install the close-clearance warning sign is evidence that the owner is in violation of Iowa Code section 327F.13.

b. The owner, an employee or a person working on or near the tracks may contest the determination. If the determination is contested, 761—Chapter 13 applies.

[ARC 0218D, IAB 4/15/26, effective 5/20/26]

761—813.5(327F) Reimbursement.

813.5(1) The owner may request reimbursement from the department for up to \$100 per sign for the cost and installation of the close clearance or no clearance ahead warning sign.

813.5(2) To be reimbursed, the owner is to complete Form 291303, “Close-Clearance Warning Sign Certification.” The form is available on the department’s website at www.iowadot.gov or from the modal transportation bureau.

813.5(3) The owner is to submit the form to the modal transportation bureau and certify that the warning sign complies with the obligations in rule 761—813.3(327F) and provide proof of purchase.

813.5(4) The department may inspect, at any time, the sign installation to confirm that the warning sign meets the minimum obligations.

[ARC 0218D, IAB 4/15/26, effective 5/20/26]

These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code section 327F.13.

[Filed ARC 8202B (Notice ARC 7885B, IAB 7/1/09), IAB 10/7/09, effective 11/11/09]

[Filed ARC 3881C (Notice ARC 3756C, IAB 4/25/18), IAB 7/4/18, effective 8/8/18]

[Filed ARC 0218D (Notice ARC 9884C, IAB 1/7/26), IAB 4/15/26, effective 5/20/26]