PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Rail Safety and Carriers Division
Railroad Safety Branch
Railroad Operations and Safety Section

RESOLUTION SR-92
Date December 3, 1997

R E S O L U T I O N

GRANTING AN EXEMPTION FROM THE REQUIREMENTS OF SECTIONS 2.1 AND 3.2 OF GENERAL ORDER 26-D RELATING TO MINIMUM OVERHEAD AND SIDE CLEARANCES AT THE TANDEM ROTARY DUMPER AT THE LOS ANGELES EXPORT TERMINAL (LAXT) AT PIER 300 ON TERMINAL ISLAND.

BACKGROUND

By letter dated October 10, 1997, Union Pacific Railroad Company (UP) requests an exemption from the Commission's General Order 26-D, Sections 2.1 and 3.2, to operate trains through the newly constructed LAXT dry bulk (coal and coke) facility on Terminal Island.[1] The tandem rotary side dumper machine at this facility is impaired from centerline of track on the west side at 6 feet 1- 1/8 inches, and on the east side at 6 feet 0-11/16 inches (when wall is retracted) or 5 feet 5 - 15/16 inches (when the wall is extended to permit rotation and dumping).

This tandem rotary dumper has been designed and constructed to allow adequate side clearance to permit the locomotives to pass through the dumper at very slow speed. The east wall retracts approximately six inches while the locomotives and cars are moving through the dumper. The walls extend inward to provide side support to the hopper cars as they are rotated and dumped.

The overhead clearance exemption is required for the clamps which hold the rail cars in place during rotation of the dumper. These can be retracted to a maximum of 15 feet 7 inches above top of rail at a distance of 4 feet 8-1/4 inches from centerline. This retraction provides adequate clearance from the roof of the locomotive for movement at slow speeds through the dumper. (The clamps attach to each set of cars as they are rotated and dumped.) UP justifies the request because the rotary side dumper is a specialized piece of equipment for

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1 General Order 26-D prescribes in Section 2.1 a minimum overhead clearance of 22 feet 6 inches above top of rail and in Section 3.2 a minimum side clearance of 8 feet 6 inches. These dimensions protect train persons occupying the tops or sides of rail equipment.

unloading coal or coke from open top hopper cars. This device cannot be constructed so as to allow a minimum side clearance of 8 feet 6 inches from centerline or an overhead clearance of 22 feet 6 inches above top of rail.

UP also requests exemptions from Section 3.2 for additional devices which are necessary for the safe operation of the rotary dumper:

1. Two pairs of photoelectric sending and receiving units located 30 and 44 feet, respectively, from the entrance to the dumper building. The sender units are 17 -3/4 inches high and the receiving (reflector) units are 13 - 3/4 inches high. These units are placed on the ballast at a distance of 4 feet 6 inches from centerline and designed so that the steps of the locomotive will clear them. These devices are employed as part of the control system of the dumper to identify locomotives in the middle of a coal train.
2. Two sets of wheel clamps located on each side of the track approximately 20 feet from the entrance to the dumper building and 27 feet from the exit. These wheel clamp stations are 6 feet 6 inches from the centerline and extend two feet above the surface of the ballast. They permit local control of the clamps in conjunction with operation of the existing and future car indexer (the device that physically moves the train).
3. An electric eye reflector stand located 30 feet from the exit end of the dumper building. This stand is 5 feet 6 inches from centerline and extends 20 inches above the ballast. This device is used to position the car indexer to handle physical movement of the train through the dumper after initial positioning by the train crew.

DISCUSSION

Tandem side rotary dumpers are in common use in the eastern part of the United States and have proven to be safe and reliable. Applicant mentions that there are at least three similar dumpers in operation at generating plants in South Carolina where railroad crews operate locomotives and the first two hopper cars through the dumper (as proposed at LAXT). Applicant states, and staff concurs, that it is impractical to modify this dumper design to meet the minimum clearance requirements of General Order 26-D.

UP advises that the safety of railroad workers will be maintained by specific regulations governing movement through the dumper. UP train and engine crews will only operate the locomotive and the first two cars through the dumper. After the first two hopper cars have been spotted in the dumper under radio instruction and these cars have been rotated, the railroad crew OPERATES THE TRAIN ahead and spots the next group of two cars in the dumper. At that time, physical movement of the

train through the dumper is handled automatically by a device called a tandem positioner (indexer) which engages the couplers (outside the dumper building) and pushes the train along two cars at a time. Train and engine crews simply ride in the locomotive cab as the balance of the train is indexed through the dumper by the positioner. When the entire train is unloaded, the railroad crew retakes active control and OPERATES the train out of the LAXT facility. The train does not pass through the dumper again on the way out.

Whereas Sections 2.1 and 3.2 of General Order 26-D are designed to help train persons meet the unexpected, the controlled environment of LAXT with relatively limited occupation of train persons on the ground or riding on the sides of equipment permit safe operating conditions.

PROTESTS

Copies of the proposal were furnished to interested parties, including the United Transportation Union (UTU) and Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLE). On October 29, 1997, UTU's State Legislative Director made an on-site visit to LAXT and obtained a commitment from the contract operator (Pacific Carbon Services) to reduce a gap on a plank (where train persons will uncouple the locomotive from the first car and disconnect air hoses) to three inches or less. UTU has agreed to concur to the variance request provided that notice be given to train persons through appropriate railroad bulletins and that signage warn of the impairments at both east and west ends of the problem areas.

FINDINGS

The Commission finds that the clearance exemptions from Sections 2.1 and 3.2 of General Order 26-D will not impair safety and should be granted subject to requirements of advance written notice to train/engine crews and of posted signage in advance of the impairments.

THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED that:

Union Pacific Railroad Company is granted authority pursuant to Section 16.2 of General Order 26-D for exemption from the requirements of Sections 2.1 and 3.2 of General Order 26-D for train operations at the tandem rotary dumper at the Los Angeles Export Terminal (LAXT) coal facility located at Pier 300 on Terminal Island, subject to the following conditions:

1. Notices shall be issued to affected railroad employees of the reduced clearances.

2. Reflectorized signage shall be posted approximately 130 feet east and west of the impairments: Attention Train Crews. Impaired Clearance at Ground Level Ahead.

I hereby certify that this Resolution was adopted by the Public Utilities Commission at its regular meeting on December 3, 1997. The following Commissioners approved it:

Wesley Franklin

WESLEY M. FRANKLIN
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President
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