

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

## **An Act To Require Warning Lights at All Railroad Crossings**

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

**Sec. 1. 23 MRSA §7214**, as enacted by PL 1989, c. 398, §8, is amended to read:

### **§ 7214. Signboards and warning lights at grade crossings; ringing of engine bells**

Every railroad corporation shall cause signboards with the words "Railroad Crossing" distinctly painted on each side of the signboards, or as a minimum on one side if signboards are placed facing ~~on-~~~~coming~~~~oncoming~~ traffic in each direction, in letters plainly legible, to be placed and constantly maintained at the ~~sides~~~~sides~~ of highways and town ways where they are crossed at grade by those railroads, on posts or other structures, in a position as to be easily seen by persons passing on those ways. Every railroad corporation shall cause a warning light system to be placed facing oncoming traffic in each direction and constantly maintained at the sides of highways and town ways where they are crossed at grade by those railroads. Every corporation shall cause a whistle and a bell of at least 35 pounds in weight to be placed on each locomotive used on its railroad, and the whistles ~~shall~~must be sounded as a warning beginning at a distance of 990 feet, on standard or narrow gauge railroads, from all crossings of those ways on the same level, unless the Department of Transportation, on petition of the corporation or of the municipal officers or of 10 or more residents of any city or town in which the crossing is located, after notice and hearing, ~~shall order~~orders the sounding of the whistle to be discontinued in any city or village until further order of the department. The bell ~~shall~~must be rung at a distance of 990 feet, on standard or narrow gauge railroads, from grade crossings and be kept ringing until the engine has passed the crossings. On petition of 10 or more residents of the State, after notice to the railroad corporation and a public hearing, the department may in writing order the corporation to give additional warning to travelers on those ways by requiring the sounding of the whistles or the ringing of the bells at other places where the railroads cross the public ways other than at grade or run contiguous to the ways, and the orders ~~shall~~must have the same force and place the same obligations on railroad corporations as when required under this section.

The Commissioner of Transportation may temporarily erect experimental signs at certain grade crossings instead of the signboards with the words "Railroad Crossing," as required in this section, for the purpose of conducting research for the development of improved signs. The erection of experimental signs by the department at a particular crossing ~~shall relieve~~relieves the railroad company using that crossing from any liability in damages, ~~which~~that might otherwise arise against that company by the temporary removal or temporary obliteration of the railroad company signboard required by this section. The erection and removal of the temporary signs ~~shall~~must be at the expense of the department and the removal and reinstallation of signboards with the words "Railroad Crossing" ~~shall~~must also be at the expense of the department.

Nothing in this section prevents the department from making further rules for safety at any crossing, including a private, temporary, farm or industrial crossing, as it ~~deems~~considers expedient or necessary.

## **SUMMARY**

This bill requires warning lights to be placed by the railroads at every railroad crossing where the railroad crosses a public way.