



Association of American Railroads
Safety and Operations • Business Services
425 Third Street, SW • Washington, D.C. 20024

CIRCULAR No. OT-17

IN EFFECT AS OF June 11, 2025

RECOMMENDED PRACTICES FOR DESIGNING, INSPECTING, TESTING AND REPAIRING SCALES USED FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF RAILROAD FREIGHT CHARGES

TO THE MEMBERS:

The following rules, governing the inspection, testing and repairing of heavy capacity industry scales, are submitted as Recommended Practices:

NATIONAL CODE OF WEIGHING RULES

The National Code of Rules Governing the Weighing and Reweighing of Carload Freight, endorsed by the Interstate Commerce Commission, June 9, 1914, provide that "When weights obtained on railroad or private scales are used for the assessment of freight charges such scales shall be maintained, tested and operated in accordance with the Track Scale Specifications and Rules approved by the Association of American Railroads (AAR). Other types of commercial weighing devices, when utilized for the assessment of freight charges, are also subject to specific requirements. The scale specifications and rules are published in the American Railway Engineering and Maintenance-of-Way Association (AREMA) Scale Handbook. The handbook is available online at <https://publications.arema.org> or by calling 301-459-3200.

DESIGN OF SCALES AND INSTALLATION

The efficiency, ease and accuracy of adjustment and consistency of correct performance of a scale are dependent almost entirely upon the capacity, design and method of installation, and shippers should be urged to give the utmost consideration to these features when purchasing such scales.

CAPACITY

The capacity rating should be based on the AREMA Scale Specifications and Rules referred to above.

SERVICE

Scales of sufficient capacity purchased and installed in accordance with the AREMA Scale Handbook, will give satisfactory results to both shippers and carriers. The carriers, through their more extensive purchases of scales and experience in scale testing and maintenance, are in position to assist their patrons in the selection, installation and maintenance of track scales, and should furnish any assistance that may be requested.

RULES

The following general rules are recommended to cover the testing of industry scales by the carriers, subject to such changes as are necessary to meet local conditions:

ACCEPTANCE OF SHIPPERS' WEIGHTS

1. When weights are obtained by shippers on scales, such weights should be accepted for a revenue waybill only in accordance with a properly executed weight agreement, as prescribed in the National Code of Rules Governing the Weighing and Reweighing of Carload Freight, Rule 1, which indicates that such agreement will be executed only when the scales are maintained, tested, and operated in accordance with the AREMA Scale Handbook.

CONDITIONS GOVERNING TESTING

2. Scales will be tested by carriers under the following conditions:

(a) When shipper's weights are accepted under the conditions prescribed in Rule 1, and scales are tested on the regular itinerary of test weight equipment or inspection personnel, the service will be arranged and the charge will be determined by the testing railroad or its designated representative(s) (See Notes 1 and 2).

(b) When shipper's weights are not accepted for a revenue waybill, charges for tests may be made as provided in Rule 6. (See Notes 1 and 2).

(c) When scales of subsidiary lines or foreign lines are tested, charges may be made as provided in Rule 6. (See Notes 1 and 2).

NOTE 1: When, upon request to the proper officer, a special trip of a scale inspector or special movement of test weight equipment is made, charges may be as provided in Rule 6, and an additional charge may be made for additional test weight equipment moves and/or additional inspection(s).

NOTE 2: When the test of any of the classes of scales specified in Rule 2 requires movement of test weight equipment by other lines than the testing carrier, any applicable freight and switching charges on such equipment will be paid by the industry or railroad for whom the test is made.

REPORT

3. Immediately after the inspection and test of any individual scale has been performed by a scale inspector, and before leaving the premises, the inspector should furnish the owner with a report summarizing the results of the inspection and test, specifically indicating any repairs and renewals required to put such scale in proper weighing condition. If possible, the scale owner or representative should be present during the inspection and test.

REPAIRS

4. The service performed by the testing carrier when testing private scales shall not include any repairs or adjustments by the testing carrier. Minor repairs may be made under the supervision of the scale inspector without causing delay to the regular movement of the testing equipment and the performance of the inspector's regular duties, but such service does not include the furnishing of material, the cleaning of scales or other extensive repairs.

5. If upon inspection and test, the scale inspector determines that the strength of the scale is so restricted, or the condition of its foundations, lever systems, platforms, weighbridge supports or other defect, is such as to render it impossible to adjust, or to maintain adjustment within the limits prescribed by the AREMA Scale Handbook, the inspector will notify the proper railroad officials, who will take the necessary action to protect the interest of the carrier.

When a scale is condemned, weights will not be accepted until the scale is inspected, tested and adjusted in accordance with the above rules.

CHARGES

6. Any charges for testing scales used to assess railroad freight charges should be based on the type of scale, location and supporting train service required to perform the necessary tests.

On behalf of the AAR Technical Services Working Committee.

By direction of,

Nichole Fimple

AVP Business Services/Executive Dir. Rules and Standards
Association of American Railroads

Cancels Circular No. OT-17-H dated April 1, 2013

Legal Disclaimer

Any actions taken in reliance on or pursuant to this Circular are subject to Railinc's Terms of Use, as set forth in <https://public.railinc.com/terms-use>, and all applicable AAR rules.