

SAFETY BULLETIN

RAC Circular-Section 2000–RAC 12014B Update

J-HOOK PLACEMENT

This is a critical update regarding the securement of steel plate loads with J-Hooks. Several incidents have occurred nationally due to J-Hooks rotating during transit, causing straps to loosen and creating a risk of load displacement. In response, the RAC and the AAR Open Top Loading Rules (OTLR) Committee has issued new guidelines on J-Hook placement to ensure the safest movement of steel plate loads approved by Open Top Loading Rules, Section 2 - Figure 14b.

1. BACKGROUND AND APPLICABILITY ISSUE

J-Hooks can rotate within the stake pocket when steel plate loads are narrower than the pocket or when the car design leaves open sides, potentially leading to loosened straps.

Applicability:

These updated procedures apply to all steel plate shipments secured with J-Hooks in stake pockets with 3 open sides **Effective Date: Jan. 15, 2025.** All shipments must follow these revised guidelines immediately, as outlined by the RAC and AAR OTLR Committee.

2. REVISED J-HOOK SECUREMENT PROCEDURE

A. When to Inspect Loading:

Inspect each railcar with stake pockets with 3 open sides to ensure the JHook is placed on the left or right of stake pocket.

Trainyard Inspections:

Inspect each car carrying steel plate whenever it enters a yard or passes through an inspection point.

Repair Track:

If a car is placed on a repair track for any reason, verify J-Hook placement and strap tension before the car departs.

B. Proper J-Hook Placement:

1. J-Hook on the Outside Face of the Stake Pocket.

Acceptable if the steel plate width or the car's deck design prevents the JHook from rotating to the side.



J-Hook has rotated during transit, losing tension and creating problematic loads



Example of a stake pocket that requires the JHook to be placed on right or left side



Example of acceptable J-Hook placement on outside face due to car deck design



Example of acceptable J-Hook placement on outside face due plate stack width

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B. PROPER J-HOOK PLACEMENT CONTINUED

2. J-Hook on the side of the Stake Pocket.
 - Required if the steel plate load is narrower than the car deck and if the J-Hook could otherwise rotate and loosen the strap.
 - Place the J-Hook on the left or right side of the stake pocket.
 - Position the J-Hook so the top of the “J” or the strapping anchor point is placed on the interior side of the stake pocket.
 - Tension, or retention after positioning to ensure securement.

GENERAL GUIDANCE

1. If the car design or load width does not block the pocket sides, side placement of the J-Hook is required to prevent rotation.
2. Always place the J-Hook in a way that minimizes lateral movement.
3. Recheck strap tension after any adjustment.

3. ALTERNATIVE SECUREMENT METHODS

- Type 1A non-metallic straps may be used directly with lading anchors (if the car is equipped).
- Or using stake pocket protectors specifically designed for Grade 8 non-metallic strapping (per AAR Figure 14-B [Rev 11/24]).

4. COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

- **Mandatory Compliance:** Failure to secure loads per these updated methods can result in service delays, additional inspections, or penalties as outlined in AAR guidelines.
- **Reference:** Please consult RAC Circular RAC12014B or AAR Figure 14-B (Rev 11/24) for more detailed illustrations of approved securement methods.

5. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION & CONTACTS

RAC and AAR OTLR Committee: For further clarification or questions regarding the updated guidelines, please refer to the RAC CLR or AAR Open Top Loading Rules publications.



Updated J-Hook placement
The strapping anchor is on the interior of the stake pocket, oriented to the left or right face



Lading anchors approved if rail is equipped



cordstrap

