

## **Damaged Big Foot, or can a Fairmont Turntable, Properly Secured, Come Down?**

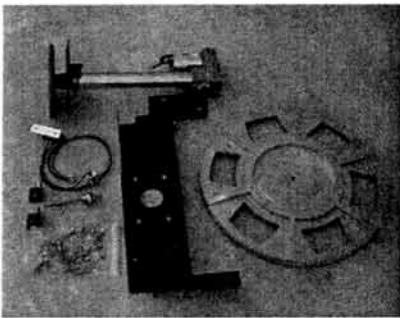
By Ric Masten

The answer is YES and NO.

NO. It is my opinion (for what it's worth) that if the turntable and lock are in "as new" condition, and if the turntable has been properly returned home, and if the turntable lock is fully engaged, the system is failsafe. That said, if any of the above is missing, the answer can still be a very big "YES."

YES. But is the system truly failsafe? Let's take a look at some, but I doubt all, of the possible problems:

- Debris in the lock or in the flange at the top of the turntable base or foot preventing the lock from fully engaging. We often operate on track with high grass in between the rails. I have found a lot of weeds on top of my turntable after going through such an area. On one occasion I had to use a long screwdriver to pry the grass out of the flange to set the lock.
- Alarm switch stuck closed up with the switch off, therefore, when the turntable is lowered, the alarm arm does not lower and the alarm does not sound. That happened to me and in another instance the alarm arm had come loose and rotated on its shaft. It was simple to lower the turntable, clean the area, tighten and lubricate the arm and solve the problem(s).
- Broken or damaged locking device or safety bar. The locking device is made up of a spring loaded extended arm attached to a steel plate and it attached above the turntable foot to the frame of your car. When the arm is released the plate moves into turntable flange, securing the turntable. While I have not experienced a problem here, one can see the potential for one to occur.
- Broken or damaged locking flange. This may be hard for you to believe, but the upper lip of the flange of the turntable foot can and does break. Think of the upper lip like two "lazy Js" lying on their backs head to head, with the curved portion being the center of the turntable and the short portions being the lip. I discovered this problem on my 1985 MT14M, when I pressed the switch to lower the turntable and had forgotten to pull the safety bar to release the flange lock. The turntable came down anyway. If any part of the flange is missing, it is very possible that the flange lock may seem to have gone home properly, but with out the flange lock engaged, the turntable can come down.



*Turntable installation kit from Les King. Do-it-yourself directions are available on line.*

My turntable had a missing chunk so large that the flange lock would work sometimes, but not others, without my knowing it. When I inspected the foot on my car, I found that the flange had another chunk about to fall out which could be

seen as a small crack. No inspection ever looked at my turntable, merely that the turntable would stay up and that the alarm would sound appropriately.

- What to do? You should NOT operate your motorcar with a turntable in the condition that mine was in. Replace the turntable or rebuild it. Mine has been rebuilt with a new locking flange turned and forced into the foot. That was four years and many runs ago. It still appears to be in satisfactory condition, but I will inspect it again before next season.
- The pin securing the turntable to the shaft is missing or damaged, permitting the turntable foot to detach itself from the shaft and fall between the rails, or worse. When you lower your turntable to perform your inspection, be certain

What else to do? INSPECT YOUR ENTIRE TURNABLE APPARATUS. To inspect it, if you don't have a pit, raise your car on its turntable, block the car appropriately so you can raise the turntable foot an inch or so off the ground, lower the car onto the blocks, check to be certain that it is stable and won't fall off the blocks, then raise the turntable and inch or so off the ground.

Clean the foot, then carefully inspect the flange and collar. Look for chips, cracks and missing pieces (I'll be using a magnifying glass this time). Check the pin that holds the foot to the ram. Check the bolts that hold the entire turntable assembly in place. Are you satisfied? Would someone inspecting your car be satisfied as well?

Next, look up and inspect the alarm apparatus. Move the arm up and down with the ignition off. Does it move easily and smoothly? Be certain the arm is bolted tightly on the shaft. Turn the ignition on and be certain that the alarm sounds every time the arm is down and that it shuts off and stays off when the arm is in the "up" position. Lubricate the arm assembly.

After your inspection is complete and if all is satisfactory, including the condition of the turntable, you might want to check your chain, (especially if it's too loose), your chain dampener, and the bolts that hold your thrust collar in place (mine came out, disabling my car). Check the condition and adjustment of your brakes, then lubricate everything as recommended in your car's manual. Let's see, now what else needs to be done...?

Moral. If you are following a car with a turntable and you wonder if the turntable is lower that the last time you looked at it, it may be. Advise the owner/driver. At the same time, you might even volunteer to help check it out.



## Railroad "Whistle Talk"

Believe it or not, railroad engineers don't blow the locomotive whistle just for the fun of it. No, Siree! Every toot has a meaning and helps to keep the wheels rolling.

Some of the whistle "talk" used by our engineers is given below, so that you may know what the engine is saying the next time you hear the whistle echoing over the countryside.

Each● means a short toot.  
Each■ means a long toot.

● Apply brakes.  
Stop

■ Release brakes.  
Proceed

■●●● Flagman go back  
and protect rear  
of train

■ ■ ■ ■ Flagman return  
from west or  
south

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ Flagman return  
from east or  
north

●●●■ Protect front of  
train

●●●● Call for signals

■ ■ ● ■ Approaching  
highway crossing  
at grade

■ ■ ■ ■ Approaching  
stations, junc-  
tions and rail-  
road crossings

■ ■ ● Approaching  
meeting, or wait-  
ing, points of  
trains

Western Railways  
Public Relations Office  
105 West Adams Street  
Chicago 3, Illinois