

Operation Lifesaver

A Partnership in Public-Rail Safety



Public-Rail Safety Guide



www.operationlifesaver.ca



WARNING SIGNS AND DEVICES

Whether on foot or in a vehicle, the only place you should ever cross railway tracks is at an authorized and properly marked crossing. Each year, people put themselves needlessly at risk along Canada's railways. When you approach or cross a railway track, BE CAREFUL!

As a driver, it is your responsibility to ensure that you cross railway tracks safely. Public highway/railway crossings are marked with sign, and may also have mechanical or electrical warning devices. Your safety and that of your passengers' depends entirely on you!

Pedestrians often illegally walk along or cross the railway tracks at unauthorized locations. Although it may seem convenient, they are playing with their life. Warning signs and fences are common near railway property. They are there to alert you to possible danger. Ignoring them can have deadly consequences.

Remember! It may take up to two kilometres for a train to stop, even under full emergency braking. Since most highway/railway crossings do not have automatic warning devices to warn of an approaching train, the most important rule to remember is that trains have the right-of-way at all crossings. Trains cannot stop quickly or swerve to avoid hitting you. Safety starts with you!

Advance Warning Signs

These signs tell you to slow down, look and listen because you may have to stop. There may be an advisory speed tab below the advance warning sign to show that the safe road speed is less than the posted speed. The advance warning sign also advises the driver of the angle at which the railway tracks cross the road.



Pavement Markings

Pavement markings consist of an "X" and/or stop line that may be painted on the pavement at the approach to highway/railway crossings.



Crossing Signs

Crossing Signs are found at all public highway/railway crossings. A Railway Crossing Sign (also known as a “crossbuck”) means drivers must yield to all trains. If there is more than one track, the sign below the Railway Crossing Sign indicates the number of tracks.



Crossing Signs with a Stop Sign

If a stop sign has been erected at a highway/railway crossing, the driver must stop no closer than five metres from the nearest rail. Drivers must not proceed until they can do so safely.

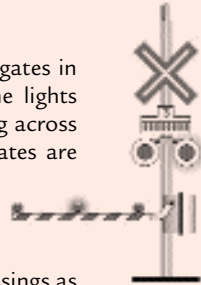
Crossing Signs with Flashing Lights and Bell

If lights and bell exist at a highway/railway crossing, the driver must stop when the lights and bell are activated because this means that a train is approaching. All drivers must stop at the stop line painted on the roadway, or if none exists, must stop no closer than five metres from the nearest rail. Do not proceed until the lights and bell are no longer active, the train has passed and until you can do so safely. If there is more than one track, make sure all the tracks are clear before crossing.



Gates

Some highway/railway crossings are equipped with gates in addition to flashing lights and bell. Stop when the lights and bell are activated and prior to the gates lowering across your side of the road. Remain stopped until the gates are fully raised and the lights stop flashing.



Train Whistle

Trains blow the whistle at most highway/railway crossings as a safety warning. They start to whistle before the crossing and whistle until the train fully occupies the crossing.

Special Circumstances

Watch for vehicles that must stop at highway/railway crossings. Be prepared to stop when you are following buses or trucks that may be required, either by law or company policy, to stop.

You can help prevent collisions. Learn and pass-on these key safety tips.

You can help prevent collisions.

Learn and pass-on these key safety tips:

SAFETY TIPS FOR VEHICLE OPERATORS AT HIGHWAY/RAILWAY CROSSINGS

- Expect a train on any track at any time. Any time is train time; so be cautious any time of the day or night.
- Never get trapped on a highway/railway crossing. Wait on the approach until you are sure you can clear the crossing completely.
- Watch out for a second train. When the last car of a train passes the highway/railway crossing, do not proceed until you are sure that there is no train coming on another track, in the same or opposite direction.
- Never drive around the gates. If the gate is down, or in the process of being raised or lowered, do not cross the tracks.
- Never race a train to the crossing because even in a tie, you lose!
- If your vehicle stalls on a crossing, get all the occupants out of the vehicle and away from the track immediately. Move quickly to a point at least 30 metres away from the track and the vehicle. This will reduce the chances of being struck by flying debris if the train hits the stalled vehicle.
- If possible, attempt to contact the appropriate authorities when a condition occurs at a highway/railway crossing that may be dangerous to highway or rail traffic. Many railway companies post emergency numbers prominently at crossings. If this is not the case, report the unsafe condition to local police. Always ensure that you, and all any others in the area, are safely away from the danger first!



- Half of all night time highway/railway crossing collisions involve vehicles hitting the side of a train. During poor weather or night time conditions, be especially alert for Advance Warning and Railway Crossing Signs. You should be able to stop within the distance illuminated by your headlights.
- Never shift gears on a highway/railway crossing. If your vehicle has a manual transmission, shift down before the crossing.
- If you see a train approaching, be prepared to stop. Most motorists seriously misjudge the speed of trains, commonly believing that they are travelling much more slowly than they actually are or incorrectly assuming that the train must slow down at highway/railway crossings. If you have any doubt, stop and wait for the train to pass.
- Never park your vehicle within 15 metres of a highway/railway crossing. Doing so, may block another driver's view of Advance Warning Signs, Railway Crossing Signs, electronic or mechanical signals and approaching trains.
- Do not pass while approaching a highway/railway crossing.
- On private roads, crossings may not be marked, or may be marked by non-standard signs. Be Alert!
- Never make a U-turn in the vicinity of a highway/railway crossing.
- Two-wheeled vehicles must slow down for highway/railway crossings. Railway tracks are extremely slippery and the potential exists for a wheel to get caught in the crossing. Always attempt to cross at a minimum angle of 45 degrees. Stay in your own lane and be aware that the traffic behind you may not have to slow down as much as you do.



SAFETY TIPS FOR PEDESTRIANS OR USERS OF WHEELED MOBILITY DEVICES

- Pedestrians must obey crossing laws just as drivers do and must yield the right-of-way at highway/railway crossings. Whether on foot or in a vehicle, the only place you should ever cross railway tracks is at an authorized and properly marked crossing.
- Never try to beat a train to a crossing or cross the tracks in front of a train. Trains cannot stop quickly or swerve to avoid hitting you. As you approach the crossing, stop no closer than five metres from the nearest rail of the railway track and look both ways along the railway track for an oncoming train. If a train is approaching, wait for the train to pass. Before you proceed, make sure that another train is not approaching the crossing on another track in the same or opposite direction.
- When crossing a track, do not step on the rail. It is a smooth metal surface and you could easily slip. Always step across each rail to where the footing is more stable. Watch for loose rock and debris.
- Never trespass on railway property. It can be deadly. All railway tracks, bridges and tunnels, yards and equipment, are strictly off limits to unauthorized individuals. Trespassers are subject to arrest and fines.
- Never throw objects at trains. You may injure the passengers or crew on board. There is also the danger that objects thrown at a train will bounce off and come flying back, injuring anyone else nearby.
- Never place objects on the tracks. It is not only illegal but also dangerous. Trains can derail, causing death and serious injury.



- Never try to climb through or under a train that is stopped at a crossing. Trains can move suddenly and without warning.
- Parents and caregivers need to teach children where and how to cross railway tracks safely. Identify authorized crossings, underpasses or overpasses in your neighbourhood for children to use. Teach children that the safety rules for a railway crossing are similar to those for crossing the street. Stop no closer than five metres from the nearest rail of the railway track, look both ways and listen for an approaching train. Children should never run across the tracks. Remember ... a train cannot stop quickly or swerve to avoid hitting someone.
- Wheelchair users, people pushing strollers, children on sidewalk bicycles and others using items with small or swivel wheels must use extra caution at railway crossings. Small wheels can get stuck in the groove designed for the railway train's wheels. This groove is called the flange-way. If possible, items with small or swivel wheels should be lifted across the flange-way; if this is not possible, they should cross only at a 90° angle.
- Do not use any audio device, such as a portable radio, CD player or cellular phone, as you approach a crossing. It will interfere with your ability to hear an approaching train. Take the time to Stop, Look and Listen.

A WORD FROM OPERATION LIFESAVER

Operation Lifesaver urges you to learn lifelong, lifesaving habits around highway/railway crossings, and to stay away from railway rights-of-way. After you study this brochure, pass it along to family members and friends.



Contact **Operation Lifesaver** or your provincial safety council/league to schedule a free highway/railway safety presentation. Certified Presenters are available to speak to students in schools and driver training classes, youth and community groups, company safety programs and the general public. In addition, specialized presentations are available for educators, emergency responders, professional drivers and recreational groups.

Please also consider joining the many volunteers across the country trained to deliver Operation Lifesaver's safety message. For more information on how you can become an Operation Lifesaver Presenter, call Operation Lifesaver or your provincial safety council/league.

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Statistics

Statistical information on highway/railway crossing and trespassing incidents can be obtained from the Transportation Safety Board website at: www.tsb.gc.ca

General Information

Other rail safety information can be found on the following websites:
Transport Canada: www.tc.gc.ca/railway
Direction 2006: www.direction2006.com

