

Russian Roulette On The Rails

Racing The Train Is A Deadly Gamble



(NAPSA)—You would never place your bet on a competitor whose opponent outweighs them by more than a ton, right?

Wrong. Shockingly, thousands of motorists risk their lives every year by trying to outrun approaching trains at one of America's nearly 150,000 public grade crossings. It might work in the movies, but often has disastrous consequences in real life. A freight train moving at 55 miles per hour can take a mile or more—the equivalent of 18 football fields—to stop.

While grade crossing accidents—collisions that occur where the road and railroad meet—have declined by 69 percent since 1981, they still occur far too frequently. According to Federal Railroad Administration statistics, in 2006—the safest year in the history of railroads—there were 362 grade crossing fatalities and nearly 2,900 accidents.

The worst part is that these accidents are often preventable: A recent report by the Department of Transportation's inspector general found that 94 percent of all grade crossing accidents are caused by risky driver behavior. Improving grade-crossing safety is an enormous challenge that combines the efforts of the freight railroads; federal, state and local governments; public safety officials; and motorists.

The Association of American

Top 5 Grade Crossing Safety Tips From AAR

- Never drive around lowered gates or race a train to the crossing. Even if you tie, you lose.
- Do not be fooled by the optical illusion. The train you see is closer and faster moving than you think.
- Always expect a train. They do not follow set schedules.
- Cross tracks only at designated pedestrian or roadway crossings.
- If you suspect a signal is malfunctioning, call the 800 number posted on or near the crossing signal or your local law enforcement agency. 

Railroads (AAR) is doing its part to reduce grade crossing accidents by heightening the public's awareness through a wide variety of grade crossing safety education programs. In addition, railroads invest more than \$200 million annually to maintain and improve safety at highway-rail grade crossings and close unnecessary crossings. Across the nation, railroads work with state highway departments to reduce the number of grade crossing incidents by installing and maintaining safety gates, electric bells and cross buck signs to warn drivers and pedestrians of an oncoming train.

The next time you're running late, think twice when you approach a grade crossing in your area. Are a few extra minutes worth risking your life for? Be safe, wait to cross.

For more information on grade-crossing safety, visit AAR's Web site at www.aar.org.