

ROAD TO SAFETY

Tie Goes To The Train

Grade Crossings: Look, Listen And Live!

(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 against all odds when they try 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.

A recent report by the Department of Transportation's Inspector General states 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. Thanks to their hard work, grade crossing incidents have declined by 61 percent since 1980 and 53 percent since 1990. This is despite a doubling in highway traffic in the past thirty years.

The familiar grade crossing crossbuck and stop signs, as well as active warning signals, are traffic control devices that are not installed by the railroads, but rather by state governments. Each state receives an allocation of federal safety funds for grade crossing improvements and prioritizes the location and types of grade crossing signals to be installed.

Railroads invest more than \$200 million annually to maintain and improve safety at highway-rail grade crossings and close unnecessary crossings. Across the nation, they employ more than 5,000 professionals who inspect, maintain and repair grade crossing signals.

Top 5 Grade Crossing Safety Tips

- 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.



North America's freight railroads are engaged in a wide variety of public education programs designed to promote grade crossing safety. They also are founding sponsors of Operation Lifesaver, a national, non-profit education and awareness organization dedicated to ending tragic collisions, fatalities and injuries at highway-rail grade crossings. The organization's volunteers operate in 49 states, make presentations to schools and community groups and partner with law enforcement to improve grade crossing safety.

According to a recent study by Northwestern University Professor Ian Savage, more than 10,000 lives have been saved over the past thirty years due to the combined efforts of the federal government, railroads, highway engineers, police departments and volunteers.

Save your own life by being safe when you approach a grade crossing in your area.

For more information on grade crossing safety, visit www.aar.org, or to join Operation Lifesaver, log onto www.oli.org.