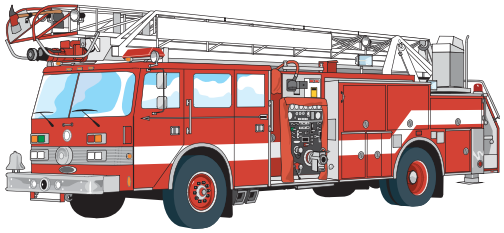
Your 1ST Safety

Railroad Crossing Safety for Emergency Responders

JUNE 2003

Death in the Line of Duty

In March of 2002, a 48-year-old volunteer fire fighter in Kentucky, driving a tanker truck, received fatal injuries after being struck by a freight train and thrown from his vehicle as he attempted to cross a private, ungated railroad crossing. The fire fighter was returning the apparatus to the station following a training exercise.



Two years earlier, a 31-year-old career fire fighter in North Carolina died after the ladder truck he was driving collided with a train at a railroad crossing with two sets of tracks. He was returning to the station after a false alarm. The gates at the crossing were down and warning lights activated. The northbound train moved slowly forward, then stopped after clearing the crossing to wait for permission from the dispatcher to proceed. A tanker car obstructed the fire fighter's view of an approaching southbound train. He drove around the first lowered gate, over the tracks and into the path of the second train. The force of the impact ejected the fire fighter from his vehicle, resulting in his death.

Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

DRIVING TIPS

Your Safety 1ST

LOOK

Plan your routes to avoid highway-rail grade crossings. Otherwise, use crossings with active warnings and clear sightlines down railroad tracks in both directions.

LOOK both ways before crossing. Trains can come from either direction.

Come to a complete stop at all crossings with passive warning devices (no gates or flashing lights). Use caution and *be prepared to* STOP at all crossings with active warning devices (flashing lights, gates). *Per National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 1500 Sec. 4-2.8.*

When stopped, be sure your front or rear bumper clears the nearest track by at least 15 feet.

LISTEN

Before crossing, roll down windows, turn off siren and radio, and listen for train horn.

LIVE

Always **….heed flashing lights, closing gates and stop signs.**

Wait**……...until safely through the crossing before shifting gears or passing.**

Never **……back up or stop on tracks. If gate comes down on the vehicle, keep going through the crossing.**

CROSSING INFORMATION

Most railroad crossings have information that identifies their location, the railroad that uses that track, and an emergency 800 contact number. This information needs to be used when:

- **Your vehicle is caught on the crossing and/or in some way blocks the track or**
- **The incident you are responding to involves a vehicle or pedestrian on or near a crossing**

☞ **Locate the U.S. DOT Inventory Crossing Number (six numbers and a letter) that identifies your location, and the toll-free emergency contact number. These numbers are usually found on the crossbuck post or the post where the crossing gates are secured. Call the phone number provided and report your emergency.**

988 988 E

Example of U.S. DOT Inventory Crossing Number. This number can usually be found on the sign with contact information

REPORT EMERGENCY
TO 1-XXX-XXX-XXXX
CROSSING # XXX-XXXX
ON STREET NAME ROAD

Recommended Emergency Notification Format

Example of posted sign

SIGNS & WARNING DEVICES

ADVANCE WARNING SIGN
- Posted on side of road to denote railroad tracks ahead.

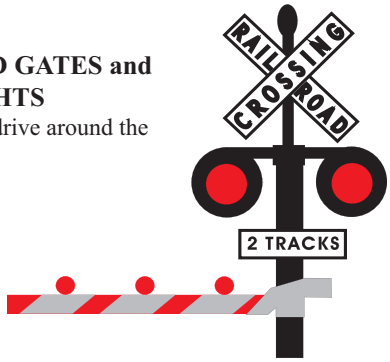
PAVEMENT MARKING
- Denotes railroad crossing ahead.

CROSSBUCK
- Fire fighter apparatus must come to a complete stop per NFPA standards.

HUMPED – HIGH PROFILE CROSSING
- Low clearance vehicles should not attempt to cross. You may get hung up on tracks.

CROSSBUCK and FLASHING LIGHTS
- A train is coming—DO NOT cross!

CROSSBUCK, LOWERED GATES and FLASHING LIGHTS
- A train is coming—DO NOT drive around the gates!



Your Safety 1ST

NIOSH, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, the Federal Railroad Administration, and Operation Lifesaver, Inc. remind you to be pro-active—your safety first so you can get to the call

IF A TRAIN COMES

If your vehicle becomes hung up or stalls on the crossing, get everyone out and keep a safe distance from the tracks. If time permits before exiting, turn on the vehicle's emergency lighting system (strobe light, flashers). If you hear or see a train approaching, move everyone at the crossing *away from the tracks* ***in the direction of the oncoming train***. When a locomotive strikes a vehicle, it pushes it forward. By heading in the direction of the oncoming locomotive you'll be moving away from any debris resulting from the impact.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

NIOSH

[www.cdc.gov/niosh/firehome.html].....(800) 356-4674

Department of Transportation

Federal Railroad Administration
[www.fra.dot.gov]…….....(202) 493-6024

Federal Highway Administration
[www.fhwa.dot.gov]……..... (202) 366-1153

Federal Transit Administration
[www.fta.dot.gov]..…….....…..(202) 366-4043

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
[www.nhtsa.dot.gov]…….....(202) 366-9550

Operation Lifesaver, Inc.

[www.oli.org]...……....…..(800) 537-6224

DID YOU KNOW?

Your Safety 1ST

RAILROAD CROSSING SAFETY FOR EMERGENCY RESPONDERS

- **Approximately every 2 hours, a train hits a person or vehicle.**
- **Nearly half of all vehicle-train collisions occur at crossings with functioning, active warning devices.**
- **Trains cannot stop quickly or swerve to avoid collisions - an average train going 55 mph takes more than a mile to stop!**
- **Optical Illusion - Trains are much closer and moving faster than they appear to be.**
- **Average freight trains weigh about 12,000,000 pounds; average fire apparatus weigh about 20,000 pounds. The train is some 600 times heavier. In a collision, the fire apparatus loses!**
- **Emergencies add urgency to decision making—going through crossing warnings may create a second emergency, distract fellow responders, and cost your life.**

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION FROM NIOSH PLEASE READ!

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NIOSH

Delivering on the Nation's Promise:
Safety and health at work for all people through research and prevention

PROTECT YOUR EMERGENCY RESPONDERS!