



FREIGHT RAIL GRADE CROSSING SAFETY

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 - States, not railroads, assess and prioritize crossing risks.
 - Railroad investments have helped reduce crossing collision rates by 25% since 2000.
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A highway-rail grade crossing is where a roadway and railway intersect at the same level. The U.S. has over 200,000 crossings, equipped with either active warning devices like gates and flashing lights or passive warning signs. Since trains cannot stop quickly or change course, safety at these crossings largely depends on motorists following signals and precautions.

While states, not railroads, assess and prioritize crossing risks, railroads invest millions annually in safety maintenance, technology, and public education. These efforts have helped reduce grade crossing collision rates by 25% since 2000, yet 95% of rail-related fatalities still involve trespassers or crossing users, highlighting the need for continued awareness.

Rail safety is a shared responsibility among railroads, government agencies, and communities. Through infrastructure improvements, technology, and education, railroads are working to prevent accidents, enhance safety, and save lives. With ongoing collaboration and public awareness, we can ensure a safer, more efficient, and reliable rail network for all.

Investing in Safer Communities

Railroads are committed to improving grade crossing safety through a mix of infrastructure, technology, and public awareness. They maintain and upgrade crossings, implement smart technologies that integrate with apps like Waze, and develop real-time digital alerts to warn drivers of approaching trains. Public safety campaigns, such as [See Tracks? Think Train!](#) Week from Operation Lifesaver Inc. (OLI) and those from International Level Crossing Awareness Day (ILCAD), educate communities about responsible behavior near tracks. Some initiatives use virtual reality training to provide first responders and the public with a visceral understanding of rail safety risks.

Reducing Blocked Crossings

Trains occasionally [block crossings](#) due to switching operations, weather delays, inspections, or movement near rail yards. While these disruptions are sometimes unavoidable, railroads work to minimize delays by adjusting operations and collaborating on infrastructure improvements to address chronically blocked crossings.

Federal Support for Grade Crossing Safety

The Freight Rail Grade Crossing Elimination Program, funded at \$600 million annually, along with \$500 million in competitive grants, supports projects that separate rail and road traffic, close unsafe crossings, and upgrade warning systems. Additionally, the Section 130 Program allocates \$230 million annually for new warning devices and surface improvements.

Recent policy changes have also increased incentives for crossing closures and allowed the replacement of outdated equipment. Demand for these programs has been overwhelming, highlighting broad support for rail safety investments that help prevent collisions, reduce congestion, and strengthen supply chains.

Rail Crossing Safety Tips

- **Always Expect a Train** – Trains don't run on set schedules. Always assume a train is coming.
- **All Train Tracks Are Private Property** – Trespassing is illegal and extremely dangerous.
- **Think of a Soda Can** – A 6,000-ton freight train hitting a car is like a car crushing a soda can.
- **Trains Always Have the Right of Way** – They take priority over emergency vehicles, cars, and pedestrians.
- **Trains Extend Beyond the Rails** – Stay at least three feet away from the tracks.
- **Trains Can Move in Either Direction at Any Time** – Never assume a track is inactive.
- **Stay Alert** – Today's trains are quieter and faster than ever. Don't use headphones or look at your phone near tracks.
- **Obey the Signs** – Only cross at designated crossings and follow warning signals.
- **We Can All #StopTrackTragedies** – 95% of rail-related deaths are preventable through safe behavior.