



TIPS FOR EMERGENCY RESPONDERS

Operation Lifesaver would like to remind emergency vehicle operators to stay alert at places where the road crosses railway tracks. The number of needless tragedies can be greatly reduced by following these RECOMMENDED PROCEDURES AT HIGHWAY-RAILWAY CROSSINGS:

- Plan routes that allow the operator or other crew members clear sight down the railway tracks in both directions.
- Have emergency phone numbers for railways at emergency dispatch centres. Know which railways operate in your community.
- If a train is blocking a crossing when you must get through, contact your emergency dispatcher to advise the appropriate railway company.
- At the scene, park emergency vehicles at least 5 metres from the nearest rail.

A 2002 study sponsored by the Transportation Development Centre – Transport Canada cautions that many train warning horns are unlikely to be heard inside a moving vehicle when other sources of noise are present. It suggests that vehicles approaching passive crossings (without flashing lights) should reduce speed, turn off any noise sources and open the windows to have a better chance of hearing an oncoming train.

HOW TO STOP A TRAIN

1. In an emergency or when responding to an incident involving railway operations, contact the railway. Many railway companies post their emergency numbers prominently at crossings. Give exact locations, using all available reference points: Check any signposts or signal housings at the crossing for emergency notification information. Use railway mileposts, name of road, town and province. **REMEMBER:** Train crews and motor vehicle drivers do not use the same geographical references. Get specific information.
2. Place a lighted red flare between the rails at least two and a half kilometres from the incident and in both directions. (WARNING: Trains may travel in either direction, on any track, at any time and may require up to two kilometres to stop.)
3. Standing well away from the rail, swing a flare, white light or bright object back and forth horizontally while facing the oncoming train. This universal “STOP” signal is understood by all train crew members. The engineer will acknowledge this signal with two blasts of the engine horn and bring the train to a stop.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT HIGHWAY-RAILWAY CROSSINGS

Q. *Why can trains not yield to an emergency vehicle?*

A. Trains cannot stop quickly. An average freight train of 100 cars, weighing approximately 8,000 tonnes and traveling 90 km/h, can take up to 2 kilometres to stop after an emergency brake application. Some passenger trains can travel up to 160 km/h. In an emergency, it can take as much as 1.6 kilometres to stop.

Q. *What should an emergency vehicle operator do when approaching highway-railway crossings?*

A. Slow down, turn off sirens, air horns and any other sound-producing devices, roll down the vehicle's window, look both ways and listen for an oncoming train. If a train is approaching, stop and do not proceed until it is safe to do so.

Q. *How can an emergency response team minimize driving hazards?*

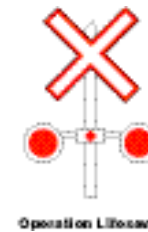
A. Whenever possible, plan an emergency response route that avoids highway-railway crossings or plan routes so that they include only crossings with active warning devices.

Q. *How can the crew of the vehicle assist the operator?*

A. One crew member can initiate face-to-face communication with the operator to determine the operator's intentions when approaching a highway-railway crossing. This will remind the operator of the carefully planned procedures for traversing a crossing.

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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