



## TIPS FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS TEACHING CHILDREN TO STAY SAFE AROUND RAILWAY OPERATIONS

As a parent or caregiver, you play an important role in teaching traffic safety to children in your care. One road safety message often overlooked is how to stay safe around railway tracks and trains. This tip sheet will help you to introduce and reinforce the railway safety message with children of all ages.

Young children have short attention spans and safety must become a habit through understanding, encouragement and constant practice. No amount of training will guarantee that a child will be safe all of the time, however, introducing safety messages early, modeling safe practices yourself and repeating the messages often, will help children to understand and avoid the dangers associated with railway operations.

### Potential Dangers

Many people, both children and adults, do not recognize the potential dangers that may be encountered at railway crossings or found on railway property. In some ways, trains, tracks and railway crossings are similar to other vehicles, roads and intersections. However, the size and speed of trains, the presence of tracks, switches and railway crossing warning signals, requires additional safety considerations and practices.

### Facts About Railway Property and Trains:

1. Trains travel at speeds of up to 160 km/h and can take up to 2 kms to stop in an emergency.
2. Trains run on tracks and cannot swerve to avoid a collision with someone or something in their path.
3. Trains can move in either direction on any track at any time.

4. Automatic switches guide trains from one track to another and are controlled by someone very far away from where the switch is located.
5. Railway crossings have special signs and signals that warn drivers, cyclists and pedestrians to be aware of approaching trains.
6. Railway property is private property and it is illegal to trespass there.
7. Railway rights-of-way provide for the safe movement of railway trains but are dangerous places for trespassers - bridges and tunnels have no extra room for a person to stand or walk safely if a train approaches.

### Staying Safe Around Railway Tracks and Trains

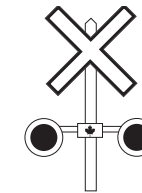
- Teach children never to play on or take short cuts across railway property.
- Help children to understand that a train's size, speed and its inability to swerve or stop quickly, even in an emergency, makes railway tracks a dangerous place for them to be.
- Show children safe places in their neighbourhood to play and cross the railway tracks.
- Teach children to cross railway tracks only at authorized railway crossings, underpasses, or overpasses, intended for vehicles and/or pedestrians and cyclists.
- When children are old enough to walk to school, to a neighbourhood store, or to a friend's home on their own, walk or bike with them to learn the route and check it for potential hazards. Identify safe routes and safe places where they can get help if they need it.
- Keep children close to you on train station platforms — show them the proper place to enter and exit stations and where to wait safely for commuter or passenger trains.
- Model and teach the correct way to cross railway tracks:
  - **STOP** no closer than 5 metres from the nearest rail of the railway track. A good indication that you are far enough back is if you can see the face of the railway crossing sign that is in front of you in the direction you are travelling.
  - **LOOK** both ways for approaching trains. Remember, where there is more than one track, trains can travel on any track, in either direction at any time! Even if a train is already passing through the crossing, another train can approach unexpectedly from either direction on any of the empty tracks.

- **LISTEN** for approaching trains. Some crossings are equipped with only railway crossing signs; others may also be equipped with red lights and a bell or red lights, a bell and gates to warn of an approaching train. At some crossings, locomotive engineers may blow the train's whistle to warn of its approach, but many communities have whistle bans that prohibit whistling.
- If you see a train approaching, or the railway crossing warning signals are activated, stop and wait in a safe place away from all tracks. Once the train has passed and the warning lights have stopped flashing, ensure you have a clear view down the tracks and look both ways again for any other approaching trains.
- Cross the tracks only when you are certain it is safe.
- Report trespassers, trespass locations or suspicious people loitering on or around railway property to the railway police or your local police.
- Set the example for railway safety for the children under your care and for others who may be watching you!

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.

### LOOK, LISTEN AND LIVE!



Operation Lifesaver

### OPERATION LIFESAVER

99 Bank Street, Suite 1401  
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6B9  
Tel: (613) 564-8100  
Fax: (613) 567-6726  
E-mail: [admin@operationlifesaver.ca](mailto:admin@operationlifesaver.ca)  
[www.operationlifesaver.ca](http://www.operationlifesaver.ca)