



TIPS FOR

SNOWPLOW OPERATORS

Snowplow operators frequently come into contact with highway/railway crossings. Special caution is required at these crossings to protect the operator, roadway users, the railway and employees.

Laws and policies vary in each province and company – please know the law, regulations and policies that apply in your province and within your organization! Following the plowing procedures recommended below can prevent needless tragedies.

Approaching a crossing:

- If required, stop the plow before reaching the crossing no closer than five (5) metres from the nearest rail (your company policy may require greater distance);
- Before resuming, make sure there is enough room on the other side of the track for the whole unit to clear the tracks, including your vehicle's overhang. Know the length of your vehicle! Remember, the train will be at least a metre wider than the rails on both sides;
- Ensure it is safe to cross the tracks by looking both ways. Open windows/doors and turn off radios or fans so as to see and hear better. Ensure you can see past obstructions such as mirrors, pillars, or attachments;
- Raise the plow blade and wing or other attachments high enough to clear the tracks and signals;
- To avoid stalling, use a gear which will let you cross the tracks without shifting;

- Be especially careful at crossings without gates, flashing lights or bell. Even if there are active warning signals, and they do not indicate a train is approaching, you must look and listen to be sure it is safe to proceed;
- After you have started over the tracks, if the crossing lights begin to flash, KEEP GOING. It is safer to continue forward than to reverse.

Reporting hazards

If the plow or wing accidentally hits the rail, signage, or signal equipment, **report it immediately**. Most railways identify crossings by a crossing number or mile and subdivision indicated on the crossing signpost and/or signal bungalow along with an emergency phone number. You can also call local police, who should then be able to direct your information to the railway's emergency contact.

Snow, salt, & chemicals

Avoid piling snow on or near railway crossings. Windrows must be kept to a minimum as they reduce visibility at crossings and may be hit by a passing train. Thrown ice or hard packed snow could result in possible injury to the public.

- Do not pile snow under gate arms or mechanisms. This may result in the malfunction of railway signal equipment;
- When possible, do not pile snow on access roads parallel and adjacent to the tracks;
- When possible, “clear” crossing approaches to bare pavement in order to expose railway/pavement markings.

Never dump salt or chemicals directly on or near any highway/railway crossing. Salt or chemicals reduce the resistant properties of track ties and rock ballast. This in turn can cause the electrical signals carried through the rails to short out, resulting in activation of flashing light warning devices or malfunction of train signals.

- To prevent sand from being carried onto the tracks, ensure sand is not applied within three (3) metres of railway crossing tracks;
- To prevent a build-up of sand at the crossing which could contribute to derailments, avoid or limit the use of abrasives at railway crossings.

Maintenance considerations

Contact the railway before performing work in proximity to a crossing!

If maintenance requires work within eight metres of the trackage, you need permission from the railway before starting in order to ensure safety and compliance with regulations.

Please remember “anytime is train time.” As you carry out maintenance at a railway crossing, crossing signals may activate as little as 20 seconds before a train arrives. An average large truck can take 18 seconds to clear the track area from a standing start.

Emergency situations

If your plow stalls or gets stuck on a crossing, get out immediately and move quickly to a point at least 30 metres away from the track and the truck. This will reduce the chances of being struck by flying debris if a train hits the vehicle. Notify your dispatcher and/or contact the railway directly. Many railway companies post their emergency numbers prominently at crossings. If the number cannot be located immediately, call 911 or the local emergency number.

Police officer or flag person at the crossing

If a police officer or properly identified railway flag person is at the crossing, obey directions. Remember, however, you are not relieved of the responsibility to ensure your personal safety and you must confirm it is safe to cross the tracks by looking and listening for the approach of a train.

For more information

Contact Operation Lifesaver or your provincial safety council/league to schedule a free highway/railway safety presentation. Please also consider joining the many volunteers across the country who have been trained to deliver Operation Lifesaver's safety message.



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