Public-Rail Safety Guide
Operation Lifesaver is committed to preventing injuries and deaths due to railway-crossing and trespassing incidents. One of the main ways we work towards our goal is through education—using resources like this Safety Guide.
This Safety Guide outlines the various warning signs and devices that you may encounter at highway-railway crossings and on railway property. It also includes safety tips for motor vehicle operators and pedestrians, and important information about trespassing.

Read through this guide and get to know the various warning signs and devices and what they mean. Become familiar with our safety tips and follow them every time you encounter a highway-railway crossing or railway property. The information in this guide could save your life.
WARNING SIGNS AND DEVICES AT HIGHWAY-RAILWAY CROSSINGS

Whether on foot or in a vehicle, the only place you should ever cross railway tracks is at an authorized and properly marked crossing. When you approach or cross a railway track, **BE CAREFUL!**

Public highway-railway crossings are marked with signs, and may also have mechanical or electrical warning devices. There are four types of crossings you may encounter:

**Passive**
- Indicates you are at a railway crossing.
- Generally found in areas of light traffic.
- Has no lights or bells to warn you of approaching trains so you must be extra vigilant.
- Continue over the crossing only if you have looked and listened for a train and determined that none is approaching and that it is safe to do so.

**Active (with Flashing Lights and Bell)**
- As with the passive device (above), indicates you are at a railway crossing.
- However, this device is usually found in busy towns or cities, and has flashing lights and a bell that signals a train is coming.
- Stay well back and do not cross while the bell is ringing and the lights are flashing.
Active (with Flashing Lights, Bell, and Gates)

- As with the previous two devices, this device indicates you are at a railway crossing.
- A train is approaching if the bell is ringing, the lights are flashing and the gate is down.
- Never go around or under the gate.
- Cross only when the signals have ceased, the gates fully raised, and you have looked and listened to ensure there are no other trains approaching.

Private

Private highway-railway crossings are those that are on roadways not open to use by the public and not maintained by public authority.

Typical types of private crossings include:

- Farm crossings that provide access between tracts of land lying on both sides of the railway.
- Industrial plant crossings that provide access between plant facilities on both sides of the railway.
- Residential access crossings that provide access to private residences from another road, frequently a public road parallel and adjacent to the railway right-of-way.
- Temporary crossings established for the duration of a private construction project or other seasonal activity.

It is important to be extra cautious and aware at private crossings because:

- Trains may not whistle as they approach these types of crossings.
- Since they are located on private property, these crossings are not typically marked with warning bells or lights. Often they are only indentified by a small static sign.
Outlined below are the various signs and devices, both passive and active, that you may see at highway-railway crossings. Get to know what they look like and become familiar with their meaning, so that you can behave safely every time you encounter a highway-railway crossing.

**PASSIVE SIGNS/PAVEMENT MARKINGS IN ADVANCE OF HIGHWAY-RAILWAY CROSSINGS**

These are non-active signs that warn that a highway-railway crossing is ahead.

1. **Yellow Diamond-Shaped Advance Warning Sign**
   - Warns drivers that the road crosses railway tracks ahead.
   - Shows the angle of the track to the road.
   - Reminds you to slow down, look and listen for a train and be prepared to stop if a train is approaching.

2. **Yellow Diamond-Shaped Parallel Track Sign**
   - Identifies highway-railway intersections that appear immediately after making either a right or a left turn.
3. Pavement Markings

➢ A white “X” may be painted on the pavement in advance of highway-railway crossings.

ACTIVE SIGNS IN ADVANCE OF HIGHWAY-RAILWAY CROSSINGS

These are automated devices that warn of an approaching train.

Yellow Diamond-Shaped Advance Warning Sign with Yellow Flashing Lights

➢ Warns drivers that they are approaching a highway-railway crossing.
➢ When the yellow lights are flashing it indicates that the crossing signals are, or are about to become, active.
➢ Be prepared to stop.
➢ Shows the angle of the track to the road.
1. The Railway Crossing sign
(also known as a “Crossbuck”)

- The most common sign at public highway-railway crossings.
- Indicates to drivers that they must yield the right-of-way, stopping if necessary, before entering the railway crossing area and must not proceed until it is safe to do so.
- If there is more than one track, a sign below the Crossbuck indicates the number of tracks present. After one train has passed, look and listen for another train approaching from either direction. Be especially careful at crossings without gates, flashing lights or bell(s).
- Always expect a train.

2. STOP and YIELD signs
(when used at highway-railway crossings)

- Mean the same as they do at highway intersections.
- The Stop sign indicates to drivers that they must stop their vehicles completely before entering the railway crossing area and must not proceed until it is safe to do so.
- The Yield sign indicates to drivers that they must yield the right-of-way, stopping if necessary, before entering the railway crossing area and must not proceed until it is safe to do so.
3. The EXEMPT sign

- Used in some provinces and placed in advance of the Crossbuck.
- Informs drivers of vehicles required by law to stop at all highway-railway crossings, that a stop is not required, except when a train is approaching or occupying the crossing, or the driver's view of the sign is blocked.

4. DO NOT STOP ON TRACKS sign

- Usage and placement varies from province to province.
- Reminds you not to stop on the railway track for any reason.

5. Pavement Markings

- A double stop line may be painted on the pavement five metres prior to the highway-railway crossing.
- You must stop no closer than five metres and no farther than 15 metres from the nearest rail.

6. 2 TRAINS sign

- Indicates there may be a second train coming on the same or another track.
- Always look both ways to ensure all trains have passed and all tracks are clear before crossing.
ACTIVE DEVICES AT HIGHWAY-RAILWAY CROSSINGS

These are automated devices that warn of an approaching train.

1. Flashing Red Lights

- Warn of an approaching train.
- Accompanied by bell(s).
- Red lights flashing mean a train is approaching.
- Stop and wait for the train to pass.
- Proceed when the lights and bell(s) have stopped, the train has passed and you can do so safely.

2. Flashing Red Lights with Bell(s) and Gates

- Used to close the road when a train approaches.
- Stop when the lights and bell(s) are activated and prior to the gates lowering across your side of the road.
- Remain stopped until the gates are fully raised and the lights stop flashing.
- It is illegal to go around the gates.

Train Whistle

Trains blow the whistle at most highway-railway crossings as a safety warning. They start to whistle before the crossing and whistle until the train fully occupies the crossing.
Special Circumstances

Watch for vehicles that must stop at highway-railway crossings. Be prepared to stop when you are following buses or trucks that may be required, either by law or company policy, to stop.

To access specialized materials containing specific safety information for professional drivers, emergency responders and new drivers, please visit: www.operationlifesaver.ca/resources/professional-drivers.

For additional information related to Signs and Devices, please visit: www.operationlifesaver.ca/facts-and-stats/signs-and-devices.

SAFETY TIPS FOR VEHICLE OPERATORS AT HIGHWAY-RAILWAY CROSSINGS

You can help prevent collisions. Learn and pass-on these key safety tips:

- Expect a train on any track at any time. Any time is train time—so be cautious any time of the day or night.
- Never get trapped on a highway-railway crossing. Wait on the approach until you are sure you can clear the crossing completely.
- Watch out for a second train. When the last car of a train passes the highway-railway crossing, do not proceed until you are sure that there is no train coming on another track, in the same or opposite direction.
- Never drive around the gates. If the gate is down, or in the process of being raised or lowered, do not cross the tracks.
- Never race a train to the crossing because even in a tie, you lose!
If your vehicle stalls on a crossing:

- Get all the occupants out of the vehicle and away from the track immediately.

- Move quickly to a point at least 30 metres away from the track and the vehicle (if possible, towards the direction of the oncoming train). This will reduce the chances of being struck by flying debris if the train hits the stalled vehicle.

Report any conditions at highway-railway crossings that may be dangerous to highway or rail traffic.

- Ensure that you, and others in the area, are safe.

- Call the railway emergency number, generally posted prominently at crossings.

- If this number cannot be located immediately, call 911 or local emergency number.

Half of all night time highway-railway crossing collisions involve vehicles hitting the side of a train.

- During poor weather or night time conditions, be especially alert for Advance Warning and Railway Crossing Signs.

- Always drive at a speed that allows you to stop within the distance illuminated by your headlights—so you have a clear view of the road ahead of you.

Never shift gears on a highway-railway crossing. If your vehicle has a manual transmission, shift down before the crossing.

If you see a train approaching, be prepared to stop. Most motorists seriously misjudge the speed of trains, commonly believing that they are travelling much more slowly than they actually are or incorrectly assuming that the train must slow down at highway-railway crossings. If you have any doubt, stop and wait for the train to pass.
Never park your vehicle within 15 metres of a highway-railway crossing. Doing so, may block another driver’s view of Advance Warning Signs, Railway Crossing Signs, electronic or mechanical signals and approaching trains.

Do not pass while approaching a highway-railway crossing.

On private roads, crossings may not be marked, or may be marked by non-standard signs. Be Alert!

Never make a U-turn in the vicinity of a highway-railway crossing.

Two-wheeled vehicles must slow down for highway-railway crossings.

- Railway tracks are extremely slippery and the potential exists for a wheel to get caught in the crossing.
- Always attempt to cross at a minimum angle of 45 degrees.
- Stay in your own lane and be aware that the traffic behind you may not have to slow down as much as you do.

For further rail safety information and resources, please visit: www.operationlifesaver.ca/resources/general.
Safety Tips for Pedestrians or Users of Wheeled Mobility Devices

- Pedestrians must obey crossing laws just as drivers do and must yield the right-of-way at highway-railway crossings. Whether on foot or in a vehicle, the only place you should ever cross railway tracks is at an authorized and properly marked crossing.

- Never try to beat a train to a crossing or cross the tracks in front of a train. Trains cannot stop quickly and cannot swerve to avoid hitting you.

- **As you approach a crossing:**
  - Stop no closer than five metres from the nearest rail of the railway track.
  - Look both ways along the railway track for an oncoming train.
  - If a train is approaching, wait for the train to pass.
  - Before you proceed, make sure that another train is not approaching the crossing on another track in the same or opposite direction.

- When crossing a track, do not step on the rail. It is a smooth metal surface and you could easily slip. Always step across each rail to where the footing is more stable. Watch for loose rock and debris.

- Never throw objects at trains. You may injure the passengers or crew on board. There is also the danger that objects thrown at a train will bounce off and come flying back, injuring anyone else nearby.

- Never place objects on the tracks. It is not only illegal but also dangerous. Trains can derail, causing death and serious injury.
Parents and caregivers need to teach children where and how to cross railway tracks safely.

- Identify authorized crossings, underpasses or overpasses in your neighbourhood for children to use.
- Teach children that the safety rules for a railway crossing are similar to those for crossing the street.
- Stop no closer than five metres from the nearest rail of the railway track, look both ways and listen for an approaching train.
- Children should never run across the tracks.

To access resources to aid in teaching rail safety to children, visit: www.operationlifesaver.ca/resources/kids or www.olkids.ca.

Wheelchair users, people pushing strollers, children on sidewalk bicycles and others using items with small or swivel wheels must use extra caution at railway crossings.

Small wheels can get stuck in the groove designed for the railway train’s wheels. This groove is called the flange-way.

If possible, items with small or swivel wheels should be lifted across the flange-way; if this is not possible, they should cross only at a 90-degree angle.

Do not use any audio device, such as a portable radio, MP3 player or cellular phone, as you approach a crossing. It will interfere with your ability to hear an approaching train. Take the time to Stop, Look and Listen.

“Pedestrians must obey crossing laws just as drivers do… ”
Here are some important warning signs to look out for when you are around railway property—become familiar with what they look like and be sure to understand their meaning.

2 TRAINS sign

- Indicates there may be a second train coming on the same or another track.
- Always look both ways to ensure all trains have passed and all tracks are clear before crossing.

Platform Safety Line

- This safety line is a reminder to stand back and away from the danger of any moving train or rail equipment. If you don’t, you could be badly hurt or even die.

Important Information About Trespassing

Trespassing is a leading cause of railway related fatalities.

- Railway tracks and bridges are private property and any unauthorized person who is on railway property which is not designated as a crossing, is committing an offence under the law—you can be subject to a warning, fine or worse. You can pay with your life.
- Whether you are walking along the tracks, riding a snowmobile or an all-terrain vehicle, or you are simply crossing a track at a location not identified as a crossing, **YOU ARE TRESPASSING!**
- Never try to climb through or under a train that is stopped. Trains can move suddenly and without warning.
Rail tunnels, bridges and trestles are specially built for trains. Many are only as wide as the train and do not provide safe clearance, for a person, should a train approach. Do not use them as shortcuts and never loiter.

NO TRESPASSING sign

You may see this sign on railway property. It indicates that no trespassing is allowed and that there is danger present.

- You should only cross railway tracks at marked crossings.
- Regardless of whether a sign is present or not, never trespass on railway property.
- Remember to stay off, stay away, and stay alive!

Want proof of just how real the dangers of trespassing are?

Operation Lifesaver urges you to learn lifelong, lifesaving habits around highway-railway crossings, and to stay away from railway rights-of-way and off of railway property.

Railway safety is a shared responsibility—after you study this brochure, pass it along to family members and friends. Parents, please share the information you’ve learned from this brochure with your children so that they too develop lifelong, lifesaving rail-safety habits.

For more information on Operation Lifesaver, visit: www.operationlifesaver.ca

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Statistics

Current statistical information on highway-railway crossing and trespassing incidents can be obtained from the Transportation Safety Board website at: www.tsb.gc.ca or at www.operationlifesaver.ca/facts-and-stats/statistics.

General Information

Other rail safety information can be found on the following websites:

- Transport Canada: www.tc.gc.ca/eng/rail-menu.htm
- Operation Lifesaver: www.operationlifesaver.ca
- OLKids.ca
- TraintoDrive.net
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/oplifesaver
- Twitter: www.twitter.com/oplifesaver