

You Can't Beat That Train



Each year some 400 people are killed and over 1,000 are injured in railroad crossings. Most of these injuries occur in familiar territory less than 25 miles from home. The reason for this is simple—when people cross the same track hundreds of times without seeing a train, they become careless.

Why Train Crossings Are Dangerous

Another reason for train injuries is that people misjudge a train's distance and speed. This is not surprising, since their large size makes trains appear at a distance to be traveling slower than they are. The parallel tracks also make an approaching train look farther away than it is. It all adds up to increased risk-taking by drivers.

Play It Safe

To avoid train accidents, follow these precautions:

- Look ahead for the round yellow warning sign and white pavement markings of a train crossing.
- Slow down and be prepared to stop at all train crossings.
- Be prepared to stop if you are following commercial vehicles that are required to stop at all railroad tracks whether a train is coming or not.
- Use both your eyes and ears to detect trains coming from both directions.
- Stop if you see a train coming, or hear the whistle of a train close by.
- Stop at least 15 feet from the first track.
- After a train passes, don't go ahead until you can see clearly

in both directions, because a second train may be coming from the other direction.

- In heavy traffic, wait until there is room for you on the other side of the tracks before crossing.
- Once you start across a track, keep going, especially if you see a train approaching. Never shift gears on the track.
- Never try to outrun a train, or go around a closed railroad gate.
- Don't overdrive your headlights. The most common nighttime train accidents occur when motorists drive into trains. Look up and out in the distance, looking for reflectors and road signs.

If Your Vehicle Stalls

What if the unthinkable happens and your car stalls on the railroad track? First, get everyone out of the car and off the tracks immediately. Since it takes a train a full mile to stop at 65 miles per hour, it's unlikely the train will be able to stop in time to avoid hitting your vehicle. If a train is coming, get far away from the tracks and run toward the oncoming train to avoid being hit by debris from the vehicle and to warn the train conductor.

If there is no train coming, post lookouts while you try to start the vehicle or push it off the tracks. Be ready to give up if a train approaches.

A collision with a train means almost certain death. With odds like that, it pays to be careful and alert every time you approach a crossing, even if you cross it every day.