



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration

HIGHWAY-RAIL CROSSING & TRESPASSING

FACT SHEET

Rail – Moving America Forward

The Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) mission is to enable the safe, reliable, and efficient movement of people and goods for a strong America, now and in the future.

Railroads are Moving More People and Carrying More Goods Today, and Traveling Over 212,000 Grade Crossings

Promoting safety at the nation's more than **212,000 grade crossings** to prevent train-vehicle collisions is a shared responsibility among motorists, railroads, and transportation and safety agencies at all levels.

What is a Grade Crossing?

- An at-grade crossing is a location where a public or private road, street, sidewalk, or pathway intersects railroad tracks at the same level.

FRA's Railroad Crossing Safety & Trespass Prevention Initiative



Education



Engineering



Enforcement



Data & Statistics

One of FRA's main concerns is improving highway-rail grade crossing safety. While the railroad industry is significantly safer than it has ever been; 2015 saw an uptick in the number of railroad crossing incidents and fatalities.

- **In stark terms, 2014 had nearly 2,300 railroad crossing incidents and approximately 270 deaths. Sadly, nearly all of these incidents are preventable.**
- As part of FRA's mission to improve safety, we are working to reduce railroad crossing and trespasser incidents through the 3 E framework: Education, Engineering, and Enforcement as well as through extensive analysis of rail safety Data and Statistics. Find out more about the 3 Es at: <http://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P0844>

In the past 10 years, fatalities at U.S. crossings have declined substantially, about 24 percent. Similarly, over the same 10 year period, trespassing fatalities have declined 33 percent.

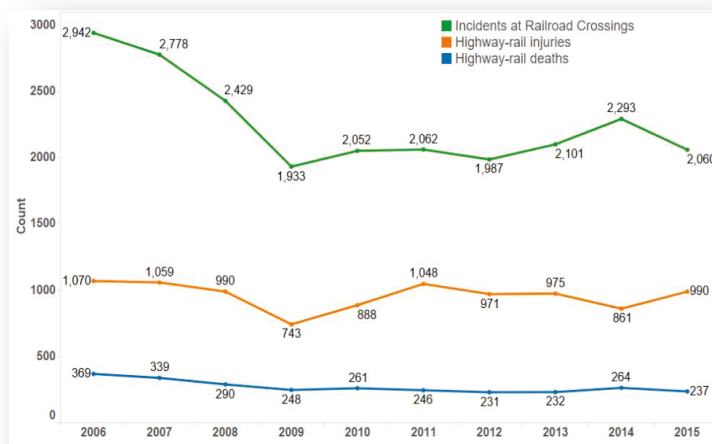
Grade Crossings and Trespassing Alarming Statistics

- Trespassing along railroad rights-of-way is the leading cause of rail-related deaths in America.
- Collisions at grade crossings are the second leading cause of rail-related fatalities in the U.S.
- About every three hours, a trespasser or highway user is hit by a train.
- Slightly over half of public crossings have active warning devices (including gates, bells, and/or flashing lights, yet account for 66% of collisions). Always expect a train on any track at any time.



Railroad Crossing Deaths & Incidents from 2006-15

Source: FRA (as of 6/23/16)



What Are The Roles of Railroads?

Railroads have the right-of-way at highway-rail grade crossings because they cannot stop or turn quickly. **A train traveling at 55 mph takes a mile or more to stop.** Therefore, a grade crossing collision can rarely be avoided through the actions of a train crew. State highway traffic safety laws generally require motorists to slow, yield or stop 15 to 50 feet from highway-rail crossings until it is safe to proceed. However, railroads have important responsibilities that are critical to ensuring safety at grade crossings. Such as:

- Inspect, test and maintain grade crossing active warning systems, including testing the equipment at least once a month to ensure it operates as intended and provides at least 20 seconds warning time to motorists before the train arrives at the crossing.
- Operate trains within speed limitations imposed by federal regulation and the railroad's operating rules.
- Provide alternate means of warning motorists in the event of a grade crossing signal malfunction.

See more grade crossings roles and responsibilities at:

www.fra.dot.gov/Elib/Document/2901

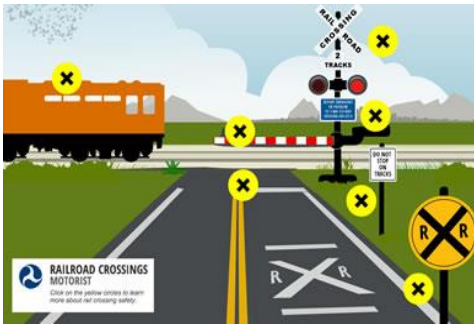
Trains cannot stop quickly! A train traveling at 55 MPH takes a mile or more to stop!



What is FRA Doing to Reduce Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Fatalities and Incidents?

Outreach

With the assistance of FRA's programs, the number of fatalities has been reduced by 54% over the last two decades. FRA's Railroad Crossing Safety and Trespasser Prevention Division remains committed to continuing this trend. The FRA recently

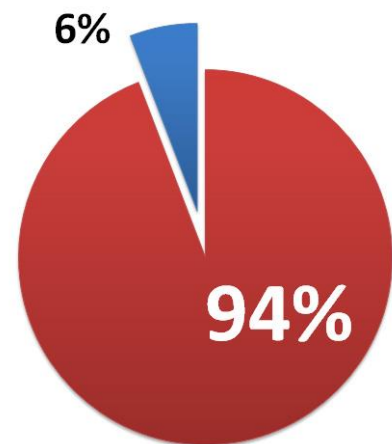


launched a revised updated website (<http://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P0843>) to serve as a one-stop shop to help drivers, pedestrians, and law enforcement stay safe around the nation's highway-rail grade crossings. The new highway-rail grade crossings website is part of FRA's ongoing campaign to reduce fatalities at highway-rail grade crossings.



Rail-Related Fatalities – FY 2015

■ Trespasser/HRC fatalities ■ Non-Trespasser/HRC fatalities



Partnerships

In addition to program resources and tools, FRA has established multiple partnerships to increase efforts reducing highway-rail grade crossing and trespassing incidents through:

- **Law Enforcement** – FRA works closely with Law Enforcement Agencies across the United States to improve railroad crossing safety and trespass prevention. For more information, go to: <http://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P0853>
- **Google Mapping** – Google has agreed to integrate FRA's GIS data, which pinpoints the location of the nation's approximately 212,000 public and private railroad crossings, into its mapping services. It means supplying drivers and passengers with additional cues that they are approaching a crossing.
- **Grants – (Over 14 million dollars)** FRA has provided competitive grant funding to states and rail industry to improve highway-rail grade crossings and track. The grants encourage innovative solutions for highway-rail grade crossings.

What is a Trespasser?

The FRA works with railroads, rail labor, state transportation departments, local communities, and schools to educate the public about the dangers of railroad trespassing.

- **Trespassing along railroad rights-of-way is the leading cause of rail-related fatalities in America.**
- By definition, trespassers are illegally on private railroad property without permission. They are most often pedestrians who walk across or along railroad tracks as a shortcut to another destination. Some trespassers are loitering; engaged in recreational activities such as jogging, hunting, bicycling, snowmobiling, or operating off-road, all-terrain vehicles (ATV).
- Nationally, approximately 500 trespassing deaths occur each year, the vast majority of which are preventable.
- In most States, trespassing is codified as a property crime and a general offense. A list of State-by-State rail trespassing laws is available in the FRA's [Compilation of State Laws and Regulations Affecting Highway-Rail Crossings](#).

Right-of-Way Fatality & Trespass Prevention Workshops – The workshops' goal is to identify and share existing industry best practices and explore new trespass abatement and mitigation strategies that the rail industry can adopt to reduce the number of right-of-way and trespasser incidents and fatalities.

Railroad Crossing and Trespasser Public Safety Tips

Pedestrians should keep the following safety tips in mind when encountering a railroad right-of-way.

- **Always expect a train.** This is especially critical where multiple tracks exist and the sound of one train can mask the sound of a second train on another set of tracks.
- **Cross the tracks only at approved crossings.** Crossing tracks at any other location is illegal and puts you at risk of tripping on rails or ballast.
- **Do not try to beat a train at a crossing.** It is almost impossible to accurately judge the distance and speed of an oncoming train.
- **Do not stand close to the tracks.** A train is at least 3 feet wider than the tracks on each side. Additionally, a fast moving train may kick up or drop debris.
- **Do not walk along tracks, on bridges, or in tunnels.** You may not hear an approaching train, and because clearances in bridges and tunnels can be tight, you may not be able to escape an approaching train.
- **Don't attempt to jump or climb on, over, under, or in between rail equipment.** Even an idle freight car can be dangerous.