

Guide to Best Practices and Resources for Grade Crossing Safety

The following safety tips and resources are provided to assist the law enforcement community in partnering with the Federal Railroad Administration to reduce collisions, injuries and deaths at highway-rail grade crossings, and to keep its own members safe while working around a rail environment.

Enforcement Saves Lives!

Strong enforcement programs have proven to be highly successful in changing driver behavior. “Click It or Ticket”, distracted driving campaigns, alcohol checkpoints and speed checkpoints have all been successful at changing behavior. Here are some successful enforcement strategies that can reduce violations at grade crossings.

- **Take 10, Save a Life** is FRA’s message to encourage law enforcement to take just 10 minutes to sit at a grade crossing and make your presence known. Take 10 minutes and fill out paperwork, or make phone calls. *Ten minutes of your time can save a lifetime!*
- **Write citations.** Grade crossing warning devices are traffic control devices and are subject to your state’s statutes. If you observe a vehicle driving around the crossing gates, or ignoring the warning system take the time to write a violation. A collision with a train can have catastrophic consequences.
- **State laws are different.** Each state or jurisdiction has laws governing grade crossings. See below for a link to the State Laws & Regulations Affecting Highway-Rail Grade Crossings

Safety Tips for Law Enforcement:

- Consider nearby highway-rail grade crossings when rerouting traffic in emergency situations. FRA recommends that when an accident, traffic or road closure results in increased traffic near a highway-rail grade crossing, additional signage and/or a law enforcement officer at that location will enhance public safety.
- Trains cannot stop quickly. A train can take a mile or more to stop once the emergency brakes are applied. Do not attempt to stop a train by placing a police cruiser on the tracks. Position the cruiser adjacent to the crossing with the emergency lights flashing.
- Look for Emergency Notification Signs (ENS), which are located at each grade crossing. This sign provides the railroad’s telephone number and the U.S. DOT grade crossing number.
- Know the proper procedure for stopping a train in an emergency situation. First, contact the railroad dispatcher by calling the phone number on the ENS to stop train movements. Position an officer at least one mile from the problem. Stay at least 10 feet from the tracks and swing a red flare back and forth towards the approaching train.
- Keep a list of contact information for each railroad that operates in your community. In an emergency seconds count. FRA and National Law Enforcement Terminal System (NLETS) partnered to facilitate access to the FRA Highway-Rail Grade Crossing safety database.

- For your own personal safety, do not crawl under or between rail cars in order to get on the other side of a grade crossing. Trains can move suddenly without warning.
- Be aware of your surroundings when responding to an emergency. Don't ignore flashing lights, gates or traffic signs in an effort to respond to a call. It may cost your life.

Tools:

- **National Law Enforcement Terminal System:** Users have access to valuable railroad crossing data using their existing equipment and network connectivity. With this new access, law enforcement and other first responders can access FRA highway-rail grade crossing safety database using their own system. Information available for direct inquiries concerning highway-rail grade crossing emergency information such as phone numbers, name of railroads and locations are presented to first responders within seconds.
- **Compilation of State Laws & Regulations Affecting Highway-Rail Grade Crossings** (App for Apple phones): provides an up-to-date and expansive look at the various U.S. State laws and regulations concerning every aspect of highway-rail grade crossings, driver behavior at crossings, and railroad trespassing. This comprehensive, easy-to-use document is a one-stop reference tool for law enforcement working in the field of highway-rail grade crossing safety. Visit <http://www.fra.dot.gov/eLib/Details/L04989> for additional details.
- **Rail Crossing Locator Mobile Application** (App for Apple and Android phones): The Crossing Locator was developed to provide users with access to the highway-rail grade crossing database and map features from a mobile device. The tool allows users to locate crossings by USDOT Crossing ID, address or geo-location; access inventory records submitted by states and railroads; and view accident history. Visit <http://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P0845> for additional information.

Educational Resources

- Operation Lifesaver, Inc. is a non-profit rail safety education organization that provides safety training for the general public and to targeted audiences, such as law enforcement.
- The Grade Crossing Collision Investigation Course (GCCCI Training) provides training for law enforcement when investigating the unique characteristics of a train/vehicle collision. Find information at: <http://oli.org/training/law-enforcement-community>.

Safety Materials

- **Citation Ticket Jackets** with driver safety tips can be distributed to drivers during a safety outreach event, or when issuing a citation for a grade crossing violation.
- **Grade Crossing Collision Investigations Checklist** is a handy reference card, small enough to carry in your pocket.
- **Key Safety Tips for Law Enforcement** provides rail safety tips to prevent injuries to law enforcement when working around trains.
- **Crash Template** is a useful tool when diagraming a train-vehicle collision.

For information on how to obtain these safety tools, see contact information below.

Regional Grade Crossing Managers:

Each of FRA's eight regions has personnel in place that can assist you with safety initiatives to help keep your officers and your community safe. The crossing managers are an invaluable resource for any rail safety issues in your community. Contact FRA for the name of the grade crossing manager in your area.

- **Grade Crossing Safety Blitzes** are targeted enforcement actions that raise public awareness at a highway-rail grade crossing. These safety blitzes allow law enforcement to target a specific location by handing out safety material or making an enforcement action.
- **Officer on the Train Program** educates law enforcement officers about motor vehicle collisions or pedestrian trespassing concerns from the perspective of the locomotive engineer. Law Enforcement officers will be on board or along the route to monitor crossings and pedestrian trespasser incidents.
- **Roll Call Training** targets law enforcement with training during roll call or shift change in the area of highway-rail grade crossing safety and trespass enforcement. This brief ten minute training will highlight the need for enforcement of highway-rail grade crossing laws.

For more information contact:

Ronald Ries

Federal Railroad Administration
Office of Railroad Safety
Highway-Rail Crossing &
Trespass Programs Division

(202) 493-6285

Ronald.Ries@dot.gov

For Media Inquiries

Michael Cole

Federal Railroad
Office of Public Affairs
Public Affairs Specialist,
(202) 493-1306

michael.j.cole@dot.gov