

Rail safety comes to forefront after Spanish bombings

Recent terrorist attacks on commuter trains in Spain reinforce the importance of safety around trains and light rail vehicles, but also the need to stay off railroad tracks and private rail property.

“Many people are not aware that walking or climbing on railroad property is trespassing. It is illegal; moreover, it can be deadly,” said Gerri L. Hall, Operation Lifesaver president. “Today it can also be a serious security risk.”

During the past 32 years, Operation Lifesaver’s public rail safety education efforts have helped reduce the number of crossing incidents involving vehicles by 75 percent. More recently, the group’s focus has moved to decrease pedestrian incidents, which have spiked in recent years.

National Transportation Week

May 16-22, 2004

“National Transportation Week is an opportunity to celebrate our achievements in transportation and face up to the challenges ahead. It also is an excellent time to convey to the American people how proud we are to be transportation workers. All of us, military and civilian, are proud to serve as members of America’s team. We will continue to foster the strong relationship between industry and government, working as partners to spur economic growth. Working together we will make transportation safer. We also will make it simpler for users to benefit from transportation resources, and we will ensure that investments and systems work smarter.

The second annual National Transportation Week Conference and Exposition will launch National Transportation Week this year in Washington, D.C. I applaud the National Defense Transportation Association for initiating and hosting this event and look forward to its continued success.”

- Norman Y. Mineta
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation

Nationally, nearly 1,000 people die each year in rail-related incidents. Many die because they underestimate the power of trains and dangers around the rails. In the aftermath of Sept. 11, 2001, safety requirements nationwide escalated. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) was created to protect the nation’s transportation system and its infrastructure to ensure the free movement of people and commerce throughout the U.S. TSA, the Federal Railroad Administration, Association of American Railroads, and Operation Lifesaver urge the public to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Do not enter private rail property without permission.
- Only cross the tracks at a crosswalk or designated highway-rail crossing after checking both directions.
- Stay off railroad bridges or trestles—they’re only for trains.
- Likewise, railroad tunnels aren’t for pedestrians. There’s room only for the train.
- Stand back at least 15 feet from the nearest rail at a railroad crossing.
- If you notice suspicious activity on or near the tracks, report it to the railroad company or local law enforcement officers. Don’t take action on your own.

By following these guidelines, the public and rail riders can enjoy train travel and help maintain the security of our nation’s transportation system.

Operation Lifesaver, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to the elimination of collisions, deaths and injuries at highway-rail intersections and rail rights-of-way, began in 1972 in Idaho. The rail safety program in Kansas began two years later, involving law enforcement, school bus drivers and railroad employees. The Federal Highway Administration has credited Operation Lifesaver International (OLI) with helping save 11,000 lives and preventing 54,000 injuries with its safety message.

Contact OLI on the Web at www.oli.org or the Iowa coordinator, Jari Mohs, at 515-291-2492 or iowa4ol@mchsi.com.