



LOUISIANA HIGHWAY SAFETY COMMISSION NEWS RELEASE

March 22, 2021

Stop. Trains Can't.

The Louisiana Highway Safety Commission is joining its federal safety partners for the “Stop. Trains Can’t.” campaign to remind drivers to always stop if a train is approaching the crossing.

The theme of the campaign, which runs through April 12, is a reference to the average train locomotive, which weighs up to 400,000 pounds and can take up to one mile to come to a complete stop.

“Trains always have the right of way,” said LHSC Executive Director Lisa Freeman. “And even if they didn’t, it is foolish to try to beat a train through a crossing. The short time you might save getting to the other side of the tracks isn’t worth risking your life.”

Some people never make it to the other side. From 2014 to 2019 in Louisiana, there were 22 crashes between a train and a vehicle in which someone was killed, according to the Center for Analytics and Research in Transportation Safety at LSU. During that same period, 163 train-vehicle crashes resulted in injuries.

In 2019, there were 94 fatal collisions in the U.S. that were caused by drivers who went around gates that had been lowered because of approaching trains, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Freeman also reminded drivers that not all railroad crossings have active warning devices – safety gates, flashing lights, and bells – so it is important to always watch for trains at all crossings.

“Especially in rural areas of our state, it is common to see a rail grade crossing that is marked only by the crossbuck sign, the familiar black-and-white ‘X’ that reads ‘Railroad Crossing,’” Freeman said. “It’s up to the driver to look both ways before approaching the tracks to ensure the crossing is clear. Don’t rely solely on what you hear.”

Here are more tips from NHTSA and Louisiana Operation Lifesaver, a non-profit public safety education and awareness organization dedicated to reducing collisions, fatalities, and injuries at highway-rail crossings:

- Always look carefully in both directions before crossing a railroad track. Two-thirds of railroad collisions occur in clear weather conditions.
- Do not stop at a railroad crossing unless there is a stop sign at the crossing, active warning devices are activated or if a train is approaching.
- Before entering the crossing, check the other side of the tracks to make sure there is enough room to fully clear the crossing.
- Never stop on railroad tracks. To avoid stalling, never shift gears on the tracks.

- If your vehicle stalls on a railroad track, quickly move all occupants away from the track and away from your vehicle at a 45-degree angle. Call the number on the blue Emergency Notification System sign, or, if the sign is not visible to you, dial 911 for help.

The “Stop. Trains Can’t” campaign is sponsored by NHTSA, the Federal Railroad Administration, and the Federal Transit Administration.

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