LOUISIANA HIGHWAY SAFETY COMMISSION NEWS RELEASE
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LHSC urges drivers: Don't be complacent about train crossings

March 30, 2022 – With approximately 3,000 public highway-rail crossings in Louisiana, it's understandable if drivers don't give much thought to crossing a railroad track, but that could be a deadly mistake, the head of the Louisiana Highway Safety Commission said.

"A car traveling 55 miles an hour can come to a complete stop in 200 feet; a freight train at 55 miles an hour takes about a mile to stop," LHSC Executive Director Lisa Freeman said. "By the time you see a train coming, it's too late for the train to stop."

That is why the LHSC is promoting "Stop. Trains Can't.", a rail grade crossing safety campaign through April 11. The goal is to make the public more aware of how to safely operate a vehicle near railroad tracks.

Louisiana had the eighth-most train-motor vehicle collisions in the country with 78 crashes, according to data from the Federal Railroad Administration. Five people were killed, and 39 people were injured in those collisions.

Many public crossings have active controls, such as lights, bells, and cross guards, that warn of a train's approach, said Jennifer Grigsby, executive director of Louisiana Operation Lifesaver, a non-profit group that promotes rail safety. But too many impatient drivers still weave around the cross guards, trying to beat an oncoming train.

"From the time those cross guards come down, to the time the train comes through is just a matter of seconds," Grigsby said. "When those arms come down, they are there to save your life."

Here are some tips from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:

- When approaching a crossing, slow down, look in both directions, and listen for a train.
- Never race a train.
- Never stop your vehicle on railroad tracks.
- To avoid stalling, never shift gears on the tracks.
- If your car stalls on the tracks and a train is approaching, quickly get everyone out of the vehicle. Move away from the tracks, but at an angle toward the approaching train to avoid getting hit by flying debris from the collision.
- In an emergency, call the number on the blue Emergency Notification System sign that is posted at every crossing. If you can't find the sign, call 911.

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