

Transportation Safety

Training ADVISOR

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Railroad crossings

The right way to railway

All aboard the safety train!

How to avoid the slippery slope:
Winter driving safety tips

Crossing with caution

Information and resources to help your drivers operate safely


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MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

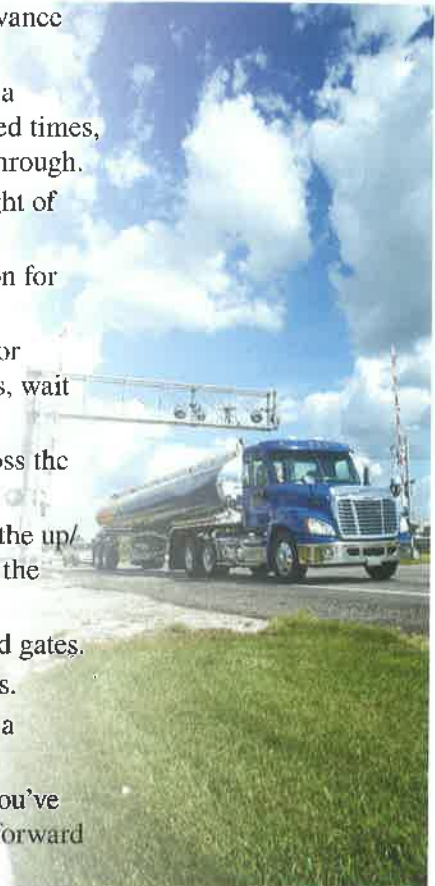
All aboard the safety train!

Some drivers might dismiss railroad crossing safety as something they don't really have to worry about. After all, what are the chances you'll miss a giant train rushing toward you? Surprisingly, in 2022 alone, there were over 2,000 highway-rail grade crossing collisions in the U.S. In some of these cases, drivers didn't notice the approaching train until it was too late.

Despite the symphony of awareness that is an oncoming train, drivers sometimes miss the signs and find themselves at a dangerous junction. According to Federal Railroad Administration statistics, over a third (779) of all those 2022 U.S. railroad crossing collisions happened in Texas, California, Illinois, Florida, and Indiana.

Especially when traveling in these areas, make sure you follow these best practices to keep you safe:

1. Begin slowing down when you see an advance warning sign.
2. Always expect a train when approaching a crossing. Trains don't always travel at fixed times, so you never know when one is passing through.
3. Remember that trains always have the right of way (no exceptions).
4. Look and listen carefully in each direction for the sight and/or sound of the train.
5. If you're unsure that the commercial motor vehicle (CMV) can safely cross the tracks, wait for the train to pass.
6. Be sure that the CMV can completely cross the tracks before starting to cross.
7. Make sure the trailer's landing gear is in the up/raised position so it does not get stuck on the tracks.
8. Never race a train or drive around lowered gates.
9. Never shift gears when crossing the tracks.
10. When crossing multiple tracks, watch for a second train.
11. If the warning lights start flashing after you've started crossing the tracks, keep moving forward instead of backing up. ♦





TRAINING BLUEPRINT — RAILROAD CROSSINGS

Crossing with caution

In 2022, there were 2,199 collisions at railroad crossings in the United States. According to preliminary data from the Federal Railroad Administration, these incidents resulted in 272 deaths and 819 injuries.

With more than 200,000 highway-rail grade crossing locations in the United States, all professional drivers must know how to legally and safely cross railroad tracks.

TIP: Distribute and review the applicable requirements in Part 392 with your drivers. Stress the importance of compliance.

Rail regs

Highway-rail grade crossing regulations for commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) are addressed in Part 392 of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs).

Section 392.10 requires that certain types of CMVs stop within 50 feet of the railroad tracks and no closer than 15 feet to the railroad tracks. CMVs that must stop include:

- Buses transporting passengers;
- CMVs transporting any quantity of a Division 2.3 chlorine;
- Certain classifications of CMVs which are required to be marked or placarded (see 392.10);
- Cargo tank motor vehicles, whether loaded or empty, used for the transportation of any hazardous material; and
- Cargo tank CMVs transporting commodities under specific circumstances (see 392.10).

When at a railroad crossing, the driver must listen and look in each direction along the tracks to make certain a train is not approaching. It's important to note that drivers must not shift gears when crossing the tracks.

Make sure your drivers know that there are also certain instances when stopping at railroad tracks isn't required. These include:

- At abandoned crossings which are marked with a sign stating the crossing is abandoned, or
- At an industrial or spur line railroad grade crossing marked with a sign reading "exempt."

If the CMV is not required to stop, 392.11 of the FMCSRs requires that the CMV travel at a rate of speed that is slow enough for the vehicle to stop before reaching the tracks.

A CMV may not cross the tracks until the driver is certain the crossing is clear. Additionally, 392.12 of the FMCSRs states that drivers of CMVs must ensure that they have sufficient space to drive completely through a highway-rail grade crossing without stopping.

TIP: Make sure your drivers understand the serious nature of this issue. Review the disqualification provisions in 383.51 with your drivers. Also distribute any policies your company may have addressing convictions for disqualifying offenses.

Driver disqualification

A conviction for a highway-rail grade crossing offense while operating a CMV requiring a commercial driver's license (CDL) will disqualify a driver from operating a CMV. The offenses, which are listed in 383.51 of the FMCSRs, include:

- Failing to stop or slow down when required,
- Failing to have enough space to completely cross without stopping,
- Failing to obey a traffic control device or the directions of an enforcement official, and
- Failing to negotiate a crossing because the CMV has insufficient undercarriage clearance.

Disqualification period for railroad-highway grade crossing offenses

1st conviction	Minimum 60 days
2nd conviction in 3-year period	Minimum 120 days
3rd or subsequent conviction in 3-year period	Minimum 1 year

A driver who is disqualified may not drive a CMV and the motor carrier cannot require/allow the driver to drive a CMV during the disqualification period. ♦





TRAINING HANDOUT — RAILROAD CROSSINGS

Signs of safety

There are two basic types of warning devices at railroad crossings: **passive** and **active**.

Passive warning devices are not electronic. They are intended to direct the driver's attention to the crossing. These devices include advance warning, crossbuck, stop, and yield signs.

- The **advance warning** sign
 - Warns that the road crosses railroad tracks ahead
 - Reminds the driver to slow down
 - Prepares the driver to stop if needed
- The **crossbuck** sign
 - Marks the crossing
 - Serves as a yield sign
- The **low clearance** sign
 - Indicates low ground clearance
 - Warns drivers with certain CMVs of potential problems
- The **parallel tracks** sign
 - Warns drivers of highway-rail grade crossings that appear immediately after making a left or right turn



Active warning devices activate automatically when a train approaches a highway-rail grade crossing. They include:

- Gates
- Bells
- Lights
- Traffic signals ♦





TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE — RAILROAD CROSSINGS

1. The minimum disqualification period for 3 or more convictions for railroad-highway grade crossing offenses in a 3-year period is:
 - A. 3 years
 - B. 2 years
 - C. 1 year
 - D. There is no disqualification
2. The two basic types of railroad crossing warning devices are working and inert devices.
 - A. True
 - B. False
3. Which of these actions can result in disqualification?
 - A. Failing to stop or slow down when required
 - B. Failing to have enough space to completely cross without stopping
 - C. Failing to obey a traffic control device
 - D. All of the above
4. Passive warning devices activate automatically when a train approaches a highway-rail grade crossing.
 - A. True
 - B. False
5. Section 392.10 requires that certain types of CMVs stop within ____ feet of the railroad tracks.
 - A. 10
 - B. 20
 - C. 50
 - D. 100

NAME: _____ DATE: _____



How to avoid the slippery slope: Winter driving safety tips

Winter is here, and you know what that means: snow, ice, and slippery roads. Driving a truck in winter can be challenging, but not impossible. Winter driving is part of a professional driver's life. It can pose many challenges for truckers, and it must be taken seriously.

The two greatest concerns with winter driving are visibility and traction. Obviously, you always want your drivers to maintain as much of both as they can, but there will come a time when they find themselves desperately short of one or the other. When it happens, the key is that they react properly and don't panic.

Here are a few basic tips to help your drivers stay safe and comfortable on their trips.

Obscured from view

Nothing can prepare drivers for that white knuckle moment when the blowing snow completely obscures their view of the road. In this situation, drivers cannot react to what they can't see. Be sure to have a conversation with your drivers about what they might encounter.

For example, if a driver's vision is suddenly obscured by blowing snow or blizzard conditions, they must resist the urge to stop. As a prudent professional driver, they will have already slowed down to adjust to the changing conditions, right? In such driving conditions, remind your drivers to maintain situational awareness so that they know what's out front, even if it's temporarily obscured from view.

Remind drivers to maintain course and steer carefully. It may help drivers to glance at the shoulder of the road and gauge its position to help maintain position in the lane.

However, everyone tends to steer in the direction they're looking, so prolonged staring at the shoulder can cause the truck to drift in that direction. Drivers should glance



— not stare — at the edge of the road as a lane position guide.

Finally, talk to drivers about prolonged poor visibility. Drivers must drive at a speed at which their forward vision is at least equal to the stopping distance and never over-drive their headlights. Since a driver may have slowed down because of the poor conditions, they should continue on course and resist the

urge to apply the brakes. Remember — they don't know how the driver behind them is reacting to the situation.

Traction is everything

Loss of traction in snowy/icy conditions doesn't happen because the CMV is driving on ice. It means your driver is hydroplaning on an almost microscopic film of fluid water between the ice and the surface of the tires, which results in less traction.

Many drivers overestimate the amount of traction they have in winter, or they don't fully understand the threats that exist to what little traction they have. The threat to many drivers is a tire tread that's too shallow, or low-rolling-resistance tires that have naturally tight tread patterns and fairly shallow treads.

If the tire condition is marginal, your drivers are at greater risk of a traction shortage. The worst-case scenario on an icy surface is a lightly loaded truck with over-inflated tires and shallow tread.

The actions of your drivers need to be controlled and deliberate. Hard acceleration, hard braking, and sharp curves all decrease traction. Advise your drivers to maintain a consistent speed, to open up the distance between themselves and the vehicle ahead, and to go easy on the brakes.

Take it easy and be ready

Being prepared before starting a trip will certainly help drivers stay safe. Planning ahead by checking the weather

forecast and road conditions will help them avoid driving in hazardous conditions.

Making sure the truck is well-maintained and equipped for winter driving is key. Remind your drivers of these tips before they head off for their next winter driving trip:

- Don't tailgate,
- Don't cut other drivers off,
- Don't block other vehicles, and
- Remember to move over and give extra space to snow plows, emergency vehicles, and cars.

Driving in winter can be tiring and stressful, so encourage drivers to take frequent breaks to stretch their legs and drink some coffee or water. Drivers need to stay alert and rested. Remind them if they feel too tired or unsafe to continue, they must pull over at a rest area or truck stop and get some rest.

Driving a truck in winter can be safe and comfortable if you train your drivers to follow these tips, to be courteous and respectful to other drivers, and to adjust their driving actions to the conditions. ♦



Key to remember: Winter driving can be challenging even for experienced truckers, so it's important they adapt their driving styles when driving in poor weather conditions, especially on snow-covered or icy roads.



Next Month's Topic: Fire Safety

While preventing fires is the best way to avoid fire-related injury, death, and property damage, drivers also need to be prepared to handle fires if they do happen. Common sense, good training, and consistent reinforcement are the best ways to prepare drivers for any situation. ♦



Expert Help: Question of the Month

Question: In the U.S. or Canada, do motor coaches have to stop at railroad crossings if no passengers aboard?

Answer: For the U.S., see **49 CFR 392.10**.

For Ontario, the Highway Traffic Act states the following (a public vehicle is a motor vehicle operated on a highway by, for or on behalf of any person for the transportation for compensation of passengers):

"Railway crossings

Public vehicles required to stop

174. (1) The driver of a public vehicle upon approaching on a highway a railway crossing that is not protected by gates or railway crossing signal lights, unless otherwise directed by a flagman, shall,

(a) stop the vehicle not less than 5 metres from the nearest rail of the railway;

(b) look in both directions along the railway track;

(c) open a door of the vehicle and listen to determine if any train is approaching;

(d) when it is safe to do so, cross the railway track in a gear that will not need to be changed while crossing the track; and

(e) not change gears while crossing the railway track."

You'll notice that Ontario's law does not mention whether passengers are on board or not; we would advise to always stop, regardless of if passengers are on board.

Buses and other public vehicles are required to stop at railway crossings that are not protected by gates, signal lights, or a stop sign. School buses must stop at railway crossings whether or not they are protected by gates or signal lights. ♦

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