

Southern Pines Police Department
Safety Tips
Railroad Safety

With the renewed focus on the important issue of railroad safety, take some time to think about your own driving habits and become re-familiarized with your responsibilities as a motorist. If you have other drivers in your family, particularly new or elderly drivers, have a discussion about ways to remain safe while around railway crossings. Remember trains travel in both directions on the tracks and are not on a schedule. You can't predict their arrival at an intersection. After one passes, remember to check both ways before crossing the tracks – there just might be another train coming. If the gates are down, it is illegal to drive around them, whether or not a train is in sight. Fines are stiff because the potential for property damage, injury and death is significant. Gates come down and lights illuminate based upon the speed of the train as it hits a sensor on the track. A fast train might signal the gates to activate, but not be visible at the crossing. Depending on the area and type, trains travel up to 70 or so miles an hour and cannot stop in a short distance. They do slow down in town, but still cannot stop like a motor vehicle can. Don't think you can beat the train and rush across the tracks. Waiting the few minutes it takes a train to pass is a good investment compared to the danger in crossing.

Stuck in traffic? **DON'T STOP YOUR CAR ON THE RAILROAD TRACKS!** It might seem like common sense, but it happens almost daily. Plan ahead. If traffic ahead of you is slow, stop **BEFORE** the tracks and leave enough room so the gates don't come down on top of your car. Also remember that railroad tracks and the land adjacent to them is private property. It is against the law to drive along the right of way, walk along or even cross the tracks. Those caught trespassing are subject to arrest. Adults and children alike are often attracted to railroad tracks and sometimes may place items on the rails. Not only is this dangerous, but it is illegal. The items people place on the rails often become projectiles once they are struck by an approaching train which could injure or, worse yet, kill someone. Please remind children to stay well clear of railroad tracks and to cross at the designated area, being watchful of any approaching train. Set a good example yourself and be a role model in this important topic area of railroad safety. It is simply not worth it to take risks when trains are involved. The Southern Pines Police Department works with Operation Lifesaver, a program of the North Carolina Rural Safety Council.

Operation Lifesaver

Operation Lifesaver is a program designed to help save your life at the most dangerous spot on any highway or road -- the highway-rail grade crossing. Operation Lifesaver is an active, continuous public information and education program to help prevent and reduce crashes, injuries and fatalities by improving driver performance at the nation's approximately 270,000 public and private highway-rail grade crossings and on rights-of-way. To achieve its mission, Operation Lifesaver developed a program that emphasizes Education, Engineering and Enforcement activities. These activities are called the Operation Lifesaver 3-Es.

Why Operation Lifesaver?

- Thousands of people are seriously injured and killed in nearly 4,200 highway-rail grade crossing crashes each year.
- A highway-rail grade crossing, also known as a highway-rail intersection, presents a particularly hazardous traffic environment for motorists. Some drivers have not yet learned how to respond to the warning signs and devices placed at highway-rail crossings. Often they are unaware that trains cannot stop as quickly as motor vehicles to avoid a collision. Others simply ignore all warning signs because they are "in a hurry" and would rather play "beat the train" than wait. Driver inattention and impatience are the most common factors contributing to motor vehicle/train collisions at highway-rail grade crossings.
- Each year more than 450 people are killed and nearly 500 injured as a result of dangerous and illegal activities on or near railroad tracks.

- It is dangerous, and illegal, to trespass on tracks.

Operation Lifesaver was born in Idaho in 1972. A Union Pacific Railroad employee was disturbed by the number of the vehicle-train collisions and created the first public railroad safety education Program. The result? At the end of the first year, the highway-rail grade crossing fatalities decreased a resounding 43 percent. Autonomous Operation Lifesaver programs currently exist in 49 states and have contributed significantly to the over 50 percent reduction in crashes and casualties at highway-rail grade crossings since 1972. North Carolina Operation Lifesaver was started on April 27, 1979 after the North Carolina Rural Safety Council decided to take it on as a safety project.

The Goal:

To make highway-rail collisions obsolete by encouraging every motorist to... **LOOK, LISTEN - AND LIVE!** (SOURCE: Operation Lifesaver - <http://www.ncol.org/framework.html>)

For more information or a presentation on this topic, contact the Community Services Coordinator at (910) 692-2732.