



## RAILROADS

JAN 2021

**LENGTH** 2–5 minutes

**TO PREPARE** Read the background information.

### BACKGROUND

- When you talk to your employees and drivers about railroad crossings, make sure they understand that failure to properly stop at crossings is illegal and can be deadly.
- According to the Federal Railroad Administration, more than 80% of railroad-related fatalities and injuries occur at public crossings.
- Railroad crossings have gates, lights and bells that warn and inform the driver of how to proceed safely. The best advice is to know your surroundings, understand posted signs and report a situation at a crossing.

### DISCUSSION

- Do you recall a childhood riddle that starts, “Railroad crossings, look out for the cars...?” This riddle is a reminder that trains and vehicles will, at some time, cross paths.
- When your drive involves crossing over railroad tracks, railway safety professionals warn that we should always expect a train.



**Signs, signals and flashing lights warn drivers about upcoming railroad crossings. What driving behaviors most often contribute to highway-rail crashes?**

- Not paying attention.
- Focusing on distractions inside the vehicle, like cell phones and texting, rather than reading signs or looking for signals. The same distractions that cause road incidents are the main reasons for highway-rail crashes.
- Failing to stop with proper clearance.
- Disregarding gates, lights and bells.



**You’re approaching a crossing and don’t hear a train. It must be safe to proceed, right?**

- Signs may be posted, warning that this crossing is in a “Quiet Zone” or that the “Train Horn is Low.” Trains aren’t always making noise!
- At any railroad crossing, a driver should expect a train.



**Drivers can be ticketed for not stopping at a railroad crossing with proper clearance. What is proper clearance?**

- **Clearance** refers to the width or height distances of an opening or passage.
- **By law, the vehicle must not stop closer than 15 feet or not farther than 50 feet from the nearest rail.**
- **Proper clearance** is marked by a solid white line. All parts of the vehicle must be clear of this white line.
- **If stopping after a crossing**, proper clearance refers to the entire vehicle stopping past the white line.

## OPTIONAL DISCUSSION

### Railroad Crossing Location Address

**You have stopped at a railroad crossing. Do you know the address of your location?**

- The Department of Transportation (DOT) number at a crossing identifies where you are, like an address. It is posted on the sign pole and also provides an emergency reporting phone number. When is the address important?
  - Reporting an incident that has occurred
  - Reporting a stopped vehicle
  - Reporting gates, lights and/or bells that are not working

## SUMMARY

- Trains approach fast and sometimes silently. Railroad crossings have gates, lights and bells, but drivers must be aware of a crossing and expect a train is coming.
- Posted signs are important warnings and should be read and followed.
- Proper clearance ensures your vehicle is in the safe zone. Paying attention to the white solid line is key.