

NOVEMBER 2021 CCDC SAFETY MESSAGE

RAILROAD CROSSING SAFETY

Injuries and deaths occur at rail crossings every day. Most of these tragedies are preventable. Though highway-rail crossing incidents and fatalities declined dramatically for decades, the number of drivers going around lowered gates has increased in recent years. Even in an emergency, some trains can take a mile (or more) to stop. If you assume a train will stop when the engineer sees a car on the tracks, you are right — but trains need at least 18 football fields of track to reach a complete stop. Do not risk it.

Conscientious drivers keep themselves informed and their passengers safe. Unless you are at a crossing, it is illegal to be on or near train tracks in any sort of vehicle. Some trains are also three feet wider than the tracks — on both sides. Whether you are at a freight train, commuter train, or light rail crossing, ensuring your own safety, as well as that of your passengers and of anyone else in the vicinity, requires you to be alert.

The National Highway Transportation Administration offers the following guidance for safety near train crossings.

7 Steps for Navigating Freight and Commuter Train Crossings

1. Stop, look both ways, and listen. Remember that trains always have the right of way.
2. Make sure you have room to get across. Once you enter the crossing, keep moving.
3. Stop 15 feet away from flashing red lights, lowered gates, a signaling flagger or a stop sign.
4. Never try to drive around a lowering gate. Never ignore signals, and always use caution.
5. Before you begin to cross, wait for gates to fully rise and for all lights to stop flashing.
6. Never assume that there is only one train coming from a single direction.
7. If your car stalls on a rail track, quickly get everyone out - even if you do not see a train coming. Then, run away from the tracks and your car. Avoid running in the same direction that the train is coming, because you could be hit by flying debris if a train hits your car. When it is safe to do so, call the number on the blue Emergency Notification System sign. If the sign is not visible to you, call 911.

If traffic in front of you stops at a crossing with lights and no side arms be sure that you stop before you get onto the tracks and are trapped by traffic in front and behind you.

THINK SMART, BE AWARE, BE FLEXIBLE, BE EDUATED (SAFE)