



Virginia Rail Safety Month Public Toolkit



Introduction

Every three hours in the United States a person or vehicle is hit by a train.

While passenger rail provides a safe, reliable, and important transportation option, it's vital to know what to do to stay safe near railroad tracks.

Governor Youngkin has issued a Proclamation declaring September 1-30, 2022, Rail Safety Month in the Commonwealth to raise public awareness of the dangers of ignoring safety warnings at level crossing and trespassing on rail property to reduce avoidable deaths, injuries, and damage caused by incidents involving trains and citizens.

In coordination with our partners, Virginia Passenger Rail Authority is promoting educational opportunities and rail safety events this month throughout the Commonwealth.

We hope you will join us in educating your members/constituents about rail safety throughout the month of September via your website, social media, and other communication methods such as emails and/or newsletters.

Together we can stop track accidents and save lives.

To help you get started we have put together a list of actions you can take to educate about rail safety and save lives. A toolkit with expanded resources is included.

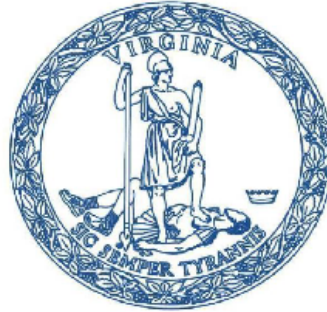
If you have any questions or would like to learn more about how you can support efforts to increase rail safety and save lives across Virginia, please contact:

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Governor's Proclamation



CERTIFICATE of RECOGNITION

By virtue of the authority vested by the Constitution in the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, there is hereby officially recognized:

VIRGINIA RAIL SAFETY MONTH

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth of Virginia ranks nineteenth in the United States for miles of rails with 3,000 miles across the Commonwealth; and,

WHEREAS, every three hours in the United States a person or vehicle is hit by a train; and,

WHEREAS, more than 2,100 highway-rail grade crossing collisions occurred in the United States in 2021, resulting in 236 fatalities and 666 injuries; and,

WHEREAS, more than 50% of collisions occur at crossings equipped with lights and/or gates; and,


WHEREAS, highway-rail grade crossing collision and pedestrian trespass on tracks together account for over 95% of all railroad fatalities; and,

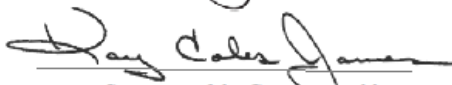
WHEREAS, Federal Railroad Administration statistics rank the Commonwealth of Virginia thirteenth in highway-rail grade crossing collisions in the United States; and,

WHEREAS, it is in the public's interest to raise citizens' awareness of the dangers of ignoring safety warnings at level crossing and trespassing on rail property to reduce avoidable deaths, injuries, and damage caused by incidents involving trains and citizens;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Glenn Youngkin, do hereby recognize SEPTEMBER 2022 as VIRGINIA RAIL SAFETY MONTH in the COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA and call this observance to the attention of our citizens.




Governor


Secretary of the Commonwealth

How to Participate

VPRA has compiled the following toolkit of content and resources to make communicating and engaging with your constituents/membership about Rail Safety Month simple and easy.

We hope you will promote Rail Safety throughout the month of September or choose a specific time period during the month to promote rail safety with your constituents/membership. Suggestions for ways to participate include:

- Adding a banner, splash page, or section to your website promoting Rail Safety Month and linking to the VPRA Rail Safety Month landing page (link provided in links section of the toolkit).
- Send an email about Rail Safety or include a section on Rail Safety in your monthly newsletter to your membership/constituents.
- Share and amplify VPRA's rail safety social media posts and/or create your own social posts with rail safety content tailored for your audiences.
- Promote and participate in Rail Safety Month activities hosted by VPRA and others (calendar of VPRA events included in toolkit).
- Include a brief statement about Rail Safety in your email signature for the month of September (sample language provided in toolkit).

VPRA Scheduled Events

September 13 – 14: Rail Safety Outreach

September 19: Relaunch of Children's Museum exhibit with Rail Safety Education

September 24: Train Day at the Richmond Railroad Museum

Rail Safety Tips

TRACK SAFETY BASICS

- Freight trains don't travel at fixed times, and schedules for passenger trains often change. **Always expect a train** at each highway-rail intersection at any time.
- All train tracks are private property. **Never walk on tracks; it's illegal trespass and highly dangerous.** It takes the average freight train traveling at 55 mph more than a mile—the length of 18 football fields—to stop. Trains cannot stop quickly enough to avoid a collision.
- The average **locomotive weighs about 400,000 pounds or 200 tons**; it can weigh up to 6,000 tons. This makes the weight ratio of a car to a train proportional to that of a soda can to a car. We all know what happens to a soda can hit by a car.
- **Trains have the right of way 100% of the time** over emergency vehicles, cars, the police and pedestrians.
- **A train can extend three feet or more beyond the steel rail**, putting the safety zone for pedestrians well beyond the three-foot mark. If there are rails on the railroad ties, always assume the track is in use, even if there are weeds or the track looks unused.
- **Trains can move in either direction at any time.** Sometimes its cars are pushed by locomotives instead of being pulled, which is especially true in commuter and light rail passenger service.
- **Today's trains are quieter than ever, producing no telltale "clackety-clack."** Any approaching train is always closer, moving faster, than you think.
- Remember to **cross train tracks ONLY at designated pedestrian or roadway crossings** and obey all warning signs and signals posted there.
- **Stay alert around railroad tracks.** Refrain from texting, headphones or other distractions that would prevent you from hearing an approaching train; never mix rails and recreation.

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY TIPS

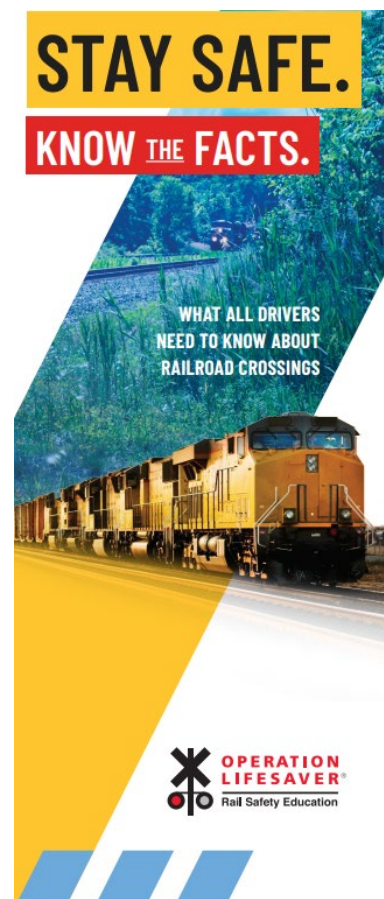
When walking, jogging, or riding through railroad crossings, it's important to know what to do when you see railroad signs and signals. Stay alert at places where the roadway crosses train tracks.

- **Always expect a train.** Trains are quieter and faster than you think, can run on any track, at any time, from either direction, and do not run on set schedules.
- **Walking on or beside railroad tracks** is illegal.
- **The only safe place to cross tracks is at designated public crossings with a crossbuck, flashing red lights or a gate.** Crossing anywhere else is illegal.

- **Crossing tracks on a bike, with a stroller, in a wheelchair, or on other narrow wheels requires caution and extra attention.** Plan ahead when choosing a route. When possible, walk, don't ride across the tracks. Cyclists, walk your bike across train tracks at a 90-degree angle. If in a wheelchair, consider getting assistance or taking an alternate route.
- **Never pass flashing lights or go around lowered gates.** Always wait until lights have stopped flashing and gates are completely raised.
- **Wait to cross until you can see clearly in both directions.** Multiple tracks may mean multiple trains.
- **Stay off railroad bridges and trestles.** Stay out of railroad tunnels. There is ONLY ROOM for the train.
- **Do not attempt to hop aboard** railroad equipment at any time. Trains, tracks and railroad yards are NOT playgrounds. Never climb on, under or through railroad cars. Never jump on or off a train while it's moving.

PASSENGER RAIL SAFETY TIPS

- **STAY ALERT.** Trains can come from either direction at any time and can be very quiet. Around train tracks or in stations, obey all warning signs and signals and use caution when using headsets or cell phones.
- **WATCH THE OVERHANG.** Trains are wider than the tracks; never sit on the edge of a station platform.
- **STAND AWAY FROM THE PLATFORM EDGE.** Pay attention to painted or raised markings at the platform edge and stay at least three feet from the train while it is coming in or out of the station.
- **WHEN ON BOARD, HOLD ON.** Hold on tight to poles or seats and listen carefully to directions from the train operator or conductor.
- **WATCH YOUR STEP.** Be careful getting on and off the train - there may be a gap between the train and platform or steps.
- **DON'T TAKE SHORTCUTS WITH YOUR LIFE!** Follow directional signs and markings that let you know where it is safe to cross the tracks. Crossing the tracks anywhere else is dangerous and illegal.



Drive for Change: Teen Rail Safety Campaign

VPRA is partnering with Youth of Virginia Speak Out (YOVASO), the Virginia State Police's teen safety advocacy group, for Rail Safety Month.

As part of YOVASO's Drive for Change campaign, participating middle schools, high schools, and youth groups across Virginia will promote rail safety in September through social media, school-wide announcements, and peer advocacy.

In coordination with the campaign, middle and high school age youth are encouraged to develop and submit a catchy rail safety slogan or tagline using rail statistics, safety tips, and other online resources. Slogans and taglines can be sent directly to Haley Glynn, Passenger Rail Marketing Manager for Virginia Passenger Rail Authority at haley.glynn@vpra.virginia.gov.

The winning tagline will be the theme for 2023 Rail Safety Month and be featured in Amtrak Virginia advertising.

All entries are due by December 16, 2022 at 5:00pm.

Sample Social Media Posts

Throughout September VPRA will be posting Rail Safety content on social media (@VaPassengerRail). Follow us and share our posts or create your own using the sample content below and graphics available at the following link: [Rail Safety Month Graphics](#)

- Think you'll hear a train? Think again! A train may be large, but it can come up behind you at high speed and with hardly a sound – until it's too late. #RailSafety
- Think you'll hear a train? Think again! Train tracks, weather, and surrounding terrain can muffle sounds, making several hundred tons of steel quiet—and potentially deadly. #RailSafety
- Think you'll hear a train? Think again! Modern railcars glide along the tracks with low friction, and crushed rock underneath the tracks helps diminish impact. You won't hear it or feel it – until it's too late. #RailSafety
- Think you'll hear a train? Think again! You may hear a train rumble by while standing on a station platform. But when a train is moving directly towards you, it's barely audible – until it's too late. #RailSafety
- Think you'll hear a train? Think again! Several hundred tons of metal traveling at high speed would seem impossible to go unnoticed, but this false assumption claims hundreds of lives every year. Don't be the next statistic. #RailSafetyWeek

Links and Other Content

[VPRA Rail Safety Month Landing Page](#)

[Graphics for use in social media, emails, newsletters, websites \(Dropbox\)](#)

[Operation Lifesaver Rail Safety Education Materials](#) – a database of additional resources searchable by audience, topic, and media type (i.e., audio, video, pdf, etc.)

[Operation Lifesaver Rail Safety Education Materials \(Spanish\)](#)

[Virginia Operation Lifesaver](#)

Sample Language for Email Signatures:

- *September is Rail Safety Month in Virginia. Safety on and near railroad tracks is everyone's responsibility. Together, we can #STOPTrackTragedies. Visit [Operation Lifesaver](#) to learn more.*