

FACE THE FACTS

HAZ ALERT



To prevent injuries while driving vehicles across railroad tracks:

- A hazard assessment should be performed before crossing railroad tracks.
- Safety belts should be used while driving.
- Commercial vehicles should not be stopped on railroad tracks.
- Braking mechanism checks should be performed before commercial vehicles enter roadways.
- Cell phones should not be utilized while driving.
- Employers should provide employees training on railway traffic safety.

Workers Struck by Trains While Driving

In the United States, approximately every two hours either a vehicle or a pedestrian is hit by a train. Approximately fifty percent of highway-rail intersection collisions occur when active warning devices are in operation at the time of the crashes.

Kentucky ranks 7th in the number of rail carloads handled and has over 4875 public and private crossings with 14 active railroads with 2790 operated miles. Kentucky also ranks 11th nationally in highway-rail grade crossing crashes (Operation Lifesaver, Kentucky). Eight workers were killed by trains in Kentucky from May 2004-May 2007 and six of the workers were hit by a train while driving their vehicles.

Following are case descriptions for the six Kentucky train-related driver fatality cases:

Case 1: A 62-year-old male dump truck driver was killed when his vehicle traveled parallel to a train then turned into the path of the train while trying to access a parallel road on the other side of the tracks. The driver was not wearing a safety belt and was ejected from the vehicle. The train engineer saw the dump truck approaching, applied the brakes, sounded the whistle, and shut down engine power.

Case 2: A 54-year-old male truck driver was killed by a train when his semi truck stopped on the railroad track for unknown reasons.



Case 3: A 47-year-old truck driver was driving a dump truck when he turned into the path of an approaching train at a railroad crossing. The driver died at the scene.

Case 4: A 33-year-old female retail sales driver died when her passenger car was hit by a train while crossing the tracks. The driver was talking on a cell phone when her car was struck. The flashing lights at the crossing were functioning and the train engineer sounded a whistle. Three weeks before the collision, a traffic signal had been removed from the crossing.

Case 5: A 37-year-old male dump truck driver died when his truck hit the side of a train at a crossing. The driver was driving down an incline where the train crossed.

Case 6: A 38-year-old driver was crossing railroad tracks when his dump truck was struck by a train. The driver had tried to stop at the crossing but was unable. The signal was determined to be functioning at the crossing at the time of the incident.

A hazard assessment should be performed before crossing railroad tracks.

When crossing railroad tracks, a commercial vehicle driver should stop within 50 feet of a the track but not closer than 15 feet, look in both directions and listen to ensure that no train are approaching. If the crossing is determined to be clear, the driver may then cross the tracks (Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration 49 CFR §392.10).

Safety belts should be used while driving.

All employees should be required to wear safety belts while operating a company-owned vehicle or while on company business. This should apply to both drivers and passengers in the vehicle. There should be strict enforcement of this policy and strict consequences if this policy is not followed.

Commercial vehicles should not be stopped on railroad tracks.

A driver should never stop on the tracks and should only cross tracks if there is clearance on both sides. If you become stuck on railroad tracks, you should exit the vehicle as soon as possible, move as far away from the crossing as possible and call 911 to alert the railroad and contact police (Federal Railroad Administration Truck Driver Safety Alert).

Braking mechanism checks should be performed before commercial vehicles enter roadways.

A braking mechanism performance check and maintenance of the vehicle should be performed on the vehicle before entering the roadway to ensure that brakes are functioning properly (Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration- Subpart C —§393.40 Required brake systems, §396.3 Inspection, repair and maintenance).

Cell phones should not be utilized while driving.

The use of electronic devices such as cell phones, GPS receivers, or computers by working drivers should be prohibited. A company policy should be established where drivers should pull over to the roadside to receive and make phone calls.

References:

1. photo-[http://cms.firehouse.com/web/online/Photo-Stories/Delaware-Firefighters-Respond-to-Truck-vs-Train-Accident/45\\$20130](http://cms.firehouse.com/web/online/Photo-Stories/Delaware-Firefighters-Respond-to-Truck-vs-Train-Accident/45$20130)

2. Federal Railroad Administration. "Truck drivers at risk on railroad crossings". www.fra.dot.gov

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