



Train Time is Anytime: Raising Awareness About the Dangers of Railway Trespassing

Byline: Canadian Agricultural Safety Association

Ask someone, “When is train time?” and they’ll probably mention the last freight or passenger train that passed by.

The correct answer, according to rail safety experts: Train time is anytime. In other words, trains can come at any time, from any direction.

The message is a simple but important safety reminder, particularly with an alarming rise in rail-related injuries and fatalities from trespassing in recent years.

The Transportation Safety Board of Canada reported [69 rail-related fatalities in 2024](#), 81 per cent of which were due to trespassing, with both figures above the 10-year averages. And in the first six months of 2025, serious injuries related to railway trespassing [were up 250 per cent](#) compared to the five-year historical average, according to Operation Lifesaver Canada.

Peter Dobrowolski is the Prairie regional lead for Operation Lifesaver Canada. He says that while everyone needs to know about the dangers of trespassing on railway tracks, it’s particularly important to stress the issue with children and youth.

“Young people are more likely to take shortcuts while walking or biking, and those seemingly harmless decisions can put them directly into the high-risk environment on railway tracks, railway property, and crossings,” says Dobrowolski, who conducts presentations at schools on rail safety.

Trespassing incidents often involve individuals using the tracks as a pathway, with potential distraction from headphones or digital devices or impairment adding to the risk. Because trains weigh tens of thousands of tonnes, trespassing encounters with a train often result in tragedy.

Dobrowolski says there are many misconceptions about trains that contribute to people not understanding how dangerous trespassing on railway tracks is, which is why he says it’s important to teach kids about rail safety from an early age.

“A lot of kids don’t know how fast trains are, how big they are, or that trains can’t stop quickly. Some young kids even think that trains have steering wheels and can swerve out of the way,” Dobrowolski explains.

“With rail safety, education is important for everyone, and starting young is key to creating safe habits that will stick with them.”



Common misconceptions about trains and railways include:

I'll hear the train coming: Dobrowolski says that trains today are much quieter than people expect and that by the time someone hears a train, it might be too late to get out of the way.

Train tracks are easy shortcuts: Not only is trespassing on railway tracks dangerous, it's also illegal. Railway tracks, bridges, yards, tunnels, and equipment are private property. Trespassing fines typically range from \$500 to \$600, says Dobrowolski, with serious or repeat offences potentially reaching up to \$50,000, depending on the province. To stay safe and avoid hefty fines, only cross tracks at designated railway crossings.

The train isn't close: Because of their size, it can be hard to judge a train's speed or how far away it is. Most trains in Canada operate between 65 km/h and 153 km/h, says Dobrowolski, with freight trains generally slower and VIA Rail passenger trains reaching the highest speeds. Keep in mind that, in certain conditions, it may be hard to see or hear a train.

The engineer can stop the train if I'm on the tracks: Dobrowolski points out that freight trains can take up to two kilometres — the length of 18 football fields — to come to a complete stop. Meaning, even if an engineer sees someone on the tracks, they can't stop in time.

Trains stick to a schedule: "Train time is any time, in any direction," is Dobrowolski's favourite saying — and for good reason. Freight trains don't run on a fixed schedule, and passenger train schedules can change. Trains can come at any time, from any direction, so always approach tracks expecting a train.

I can beat the train: Attempting to cross railway tracks when a train is coming is extremely dangerous. Consider this: a train hitting a car is like a car hitting a pop can. The consequences for pedestrians are considerably worse.

Railway signs are only for drivers: Knowing railway signs is just as important for pedestrians and cyclists, and ignoring them could be a fatal decision. Dobrowolski stresses the importance of teaching kids about railway signs and lights, especially if they live near tracks. Ensure they know to always obey warning signs, lights, and gates and know how to look carefully at passive crossings.

Rail safety is a train company's responsibility: Everyone has a role to play in preventing railway-related tragedies, including children and youth who walk or bike near tracks.



Though rail-related trespassing incidents often result in serious injuries or fatalities, they are preventable. Dobrowolski emphasizes that building more awareness, especially among children and youth, about the dangers of trespassing on railway tracks and property is essential to reducing these tragic incidents.

“Another one of our sayings,” says Dobrowolski, “which is especially relevant for kids who play video games, is that there is no undo button with railway incidents.”

About Kids FarmSafe Week

Kids FarmSafe Week is an annual public awareness campaign hosted by the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association to promote the safety and wellness of children and youth on Canadian farms. Now in its third year, Kids FarmSafe Week takes place May 11-17, 2026, and is presented by BASF Agricultural Solutions Canada Inc. More information can be found at www.kidsfarmsafe.ca.

About the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association

The Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA) is a national, non-profit organization dedicated to improving the health and safety of farmers, their families and agricultural workers. CASA is funded in part by the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership. For more information, visit www.casa-acsa.ca.