



ARE YOU RAIL SAFE?

LEVEL CROSSING SAFETY FOR MOTOR VEHICLE DRIVERS

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Consider the
FACTS

THIS INFORMATION BOOKLET IS DESIGNED TO ASSIST MOTOR VEHICLE DRIVERS UNDERSTAND THE DANGERS AROUND LEVEL CROSSINGS AND THE WAYS IN WHICH THEY CAN KEEP THEMSELVES, TRAIN DRIVERS AND THE COMMUNITY SAFE FROM HARM. PLEASE FOLLOW THE ROAD RULES AND MAKE THESE SAFE DRIVING ACTIONS YOUR NORMAL PRACTICE AND BE PART OF THE SOLUTION FOR REDUCING THE NUMBER OF NEAR MISSES AND COLLISIONS AT RAILWAY LEVEL CROSSINGS.

- Across Australia, there are more than 23,500 railway level crossings. In Tasmania, there are 106 active level crossings and 143 passive level crossings;
- 21 per cent of level crossings in Australia are active. This means they have flashing lights and/or boom gates to alert you when a train is coming;
- The remaining 79 per cent of level crossings are passive, meaning that they have either a 'Stop' or 'Give Way' sign. These also include private and maintenance level crossings.
- The important difference between active and passive crossings is that at passive level crossings, you must be extra vigilant and check for trains yourself!

Railway Level Crossings remain the rail industry's highest safety priority.

Why?

Nationally, there are more than 1000 'near misses' between vehicles and trains at level crossings each year. A near miss is when a train driver applies the emergency brakes and the train narrowly misses colliding with a truck, car, cyclist or pedestrian.

The difference between a fatal collision and a near miss at a railway level crossing can be just seconds. Almost every near miss and collision incident is due to the road user doing the wrong thing, either through error or thinking they can beat the train.

TasRail's recent successful online and print media advertising campaign highlighted what can happen when motorists' split-second decisions go wrong at road/rail level crossings. While TasRail reported a 60 per cent reduction in level crossing incidents in 2019-20 (from 85 to 33), this is no cause for complacency.

'I think part of it comes down to people perhaps not realising that these are road rules,' TasRail Chief Operating Officer Stephen Kerrison said.





Trains always have right of way and, just like trucks, they simply cannot stop quickly, especially with a load.

It can take a fully loaded freight train more than 1000 metres to stop after the emergency brakes have been applied.

To put that into perspective, that's:

- Approximately 10 end-to-end laps of UTAS stadium in Launceston.
- Close to a return trip on the Gorge Chairlift in Launceston
- About the distance between Macquarie Point and the Salamanca Market in Hobart; and
- About three laps of the riverfront at Bells Parade at Latrobe.

Collisions between road vehicles and trains at level crossings remain one of the biggest safety risks for rail operations in Australia. The social and economic cost of these incidents can be extreme. Due to the size and weight of the vehicles involved, heavy vehicle collisions cause the greatest damage to road and railway infrastructure.

As recent as 2016, there were around 150 level crossing incidents causing death or serious injury across the national railway network. These numbers are declining, however there are still multiple fatalities every year and collisions resulting in serious injuries.

Most railway level crossing crashes happen at sites that drivers use regularly—at active level crossings on dry, straight roads. This demonstrates that fatalities happen when driving conditions are perfect.

While the majority of the population do the right thing, there continues to be a percentage of drivers who don't. Complacency and inattention are the biggest contributors to near misses, as well as some motorists perhaps not understanding the scale of Tasmania's rail network.

Remember, when crossing the crossings ...

- When approaching level crossings, a motorist must ALWAYS give way to a train. Due to their size, trains appear to be moving slowly - this is an illusion and they are actually moving faster than they seem.
- Even if one appears to be far away, due to its speed it could be at the level crossing in a matter of seconds.

'...part of it comes down to people perhaps not realising that these are road rules'



Active level crossings

At railway level crossings controlled by red flashing lights or boom gates, you must:

- Come to a complete stop when flashing lights have started flashing;
- Not proceed until the lights stop flashing, and the tracks are clear;
- If a train passes but the lights don't stop, don't assume there's a fault – there might be another train coming; and
- If the lights and bells continue for a long period of time and there does not appear to be a train coming, you should turn off your vehicle (in a safe location) and look for instructions on the electrical box next to the crossing. There is normally an ID number and phone number to call.

Please make these safe driving actions your normal practice and be part of the solution in bringing down the number of near misses and collisions at railway level crossings.





Passive level crossings

When approaching a level crossing protected by a 'Stop' sign, you must:

- Come to a complete stop before the holding line or well clear of the tracks in a position where you can see in both directions along the tracks;
- Look for trains in both directions; and
- Only proceed over the tracks if there are no trains approaching.

At level crossings protected by a 'Give Way' sign you must:

- Slow down and prepare to stop;
- Look for trains in both directions along the tracks; and
- Only proceed if there are no trains approaching.

Rules at Level Crossings by protection type



Uncontrolled level crossings (ie. where there are no signals, barriers, stop signs or give way signals)

	STOP	STOP	GIVE WAY	STOP
Motor Car	STOP	STOP	GIVE WAY	STOP
Motorcycle	STOP	STOP	GIVE WAY	STOP
Buses	STOP	STOP	GIVE WAY	STOP
Goods vehicles (Light, Medium & Heavy)	STOP	STOP	GIVE WAY	STOP
Large Passenger Vehicle (more than 12 passengers)	STOP	STOP	GIVE WAY	STOP

Safety tips for motor vehicle drivers

1. It's not easy to judge the speed of trains. Always stop or give way;
2. Check ahead. Do not enter an intersection without being sure there is plenty of space for your vehicle to clear the train tracks;
3. Trains can come from either direction at any time. Always check both ways, a second train may be coming;
4. Flashing red lights mean stop – a train is coming; and
5. Trains do not always run to a timetable. Always expect a train.

Just like you, train drivers want to make it home safely

My name is Grant Youd.

I have worked in the Tasmanian Rail industry for 47 years. My current role is Senior Driver Trainer. I teach and mentor train drivers , as well as drive trains to my roster at the Burnie depot.

I have been involved in many collisions with road vehicles over those years. I can teach my trainees many things such as approach methods, awareness of surroundings that include such things like buildings ,vegetation, pedestrians - anything that needs to be taken into account to enable safe transition across the roadway.

What I cannot teach is how to cover off the behaviour of road vehicle drivers.

We can guess, roughly assume but cannot quite know what they are thinking.

As train drivers we learn to watch pedestrian footsteps, body language etc to ascertain if they recognise an approaching train. With vehicles we watch approach speeds and monitor and scan both directions.

All this while managing the train.

So many injuries and deaths still occur through inattention and misjudgement. Sometimes,sadly, it is simply bloody minded stupidity.



All because of a perceived need to save 2 minutes with scant regard for others.

Aside from the cost of vehicle damage, TasRail infrastructure and train damage, there is an insurmountable cost to life, injuries and mental health issues going forward forever.

I have for years, hoped I do not become involved in a fatality at the front of my 2000 tonne train at 50km an hour when it takes so long to stop.

That kind of emotional strain is not fair. How do I drive over that same crossing next day? What do I say to my wife and kids when I get home? TasRail places massive importance on level crossing safety and awareness programs , but as partners with road vehicles we share that same small piece of bitumen and need to respect that.

Please , I implore that respect and care be paramount at our level crossings

Thanks



**For more information on Tasmanian road safety rules,
please visit the Road Safety Advisory Council at
www.rsac.tas.gov.au or pick up a copy of the Tasmanian
Road Rules book from Service Tasmania.**

Train Control emergency number

If you notice a problem with a level crossing or are stuck on a level crossing, call TasRail's Train Control Emergency on phone number (03) 6335-2500 and press 1.

For more information, please visit TasRail at www.tasrail.com.au

