



# Sunflower State Signal

Official Publication of Kansas Operation Lifesaver, Inc.

## Coordinator's Corner



As OLI kicks off their 50<sup>th</sup> year I feel like this is the time to look back and remember our mission, vision of the future, and where and why it all started.

When we look at today's numbers it's hard to remember that through education and spreading the rail safety message, we are saving hundreds of lives. When KS OL began in 1974 average rail crossing incidents in Kansas averaged 250+ a year. This is only rail crossings. Today we average around 35. That is roughly 20 less than 20 years ago.

OLI Began with two dedicated volunteers who have now saved thousands upon thousands of lives world-wide. Just by providing information to the public and motivating others to get involved. This has been the foundation and success of OLI. Dedicated volunteers like you and community involvement. While we cannot count lives saved directly, we can see our incident numbers decrease. Thanks to volunteers like you!

*Jessica Mays*

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## OLI 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary: A Look Back

### MISSION

Operation Lifesaver is a nonprofit rail safety education and public awareness organization dedicated to saving lives.

### VISION

To be the recognized leader in providing the public with rail safety education and ending death and injuries due to trespassing and collisions on or near the tracks.

**WHO WE ARE,  
WHAT WE STAND  
FOR, AND WHERE  
IT ALL BEGAN**

Operation Lifesaver started in Idaho in 1972 after the national average of fatalities at highway-rail grade crossings had escalated to 12,000 annually. Through the combined efforts of Ed Schafer and Sam Grayson of the Union Pacific Railroad, the Idaho Peace Officers and Governor Cecil Andrus' office, a six-week public awareness campaign called "Operation Lifesaver" was initiated as a one-time, one-state endeavor.

During the new campaign's first year, Idaho's crossing-related fatalities dropped by 43 percent. The next year, the Operation Lifesaver campaign spread to Nebraska, and the collision rate was reduced by 26 percent. When Kansas and Georgia experienced similar success the following year, U.S. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson (then Vice-Chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board) urged the

nation's transportation community to take the program nationwide.

Minnesota's Operation Lifesaver program was initiated in 1982. By 1986 all 49 of the continental states had started independent Operation Lifesaver programs.

To assist in coordinating the mission, message, and activities among the autonomous state programs of Operation Lifesaver, a national program was established under the auspices of the National Safety Council (NSC) in 1978. In 1986, the national program was released from NSC and established itself as Operation Lifesaver, Inc. (OLI), a national, not-for-profit organization. Founding sponsors included the Association of American Railroads, the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) and the Railway Progress Institute. *(cont. pg 3)*



## Board of Directors

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**EVERY  
3 HOURS**

**A PERSON OR VEHICLE  
IS HIT BY A TRAIN.**



Railroad tracks, bridges, & right of ways are private property. Being on them is criminal trespassing.

K.S.A. 21-5809

Advertisement run in the  
Kansas Wildlife 2021  
Fishing Regulations

# Amtrak Unveils Commemorative OLI 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Locomotive

January 12, 2022: WASHINGTON –

A specially painted Amtrak P-42 diesel locomotive, emblazoned on both sides with the message, "See Tracks? Think Train!" was released into service today during a special ceremony at Washington Union Station. The black-and-yellow locomotive commemorates the 50th anniversary of Operation Lifesaver, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing railroad safety education and awareness nationwide.



**Amtrak** is one of several partners with **Operation Lifesaver**, which began in 1972 with the goal to reduce railroad-related collisions, deaths and injuries across the United States, utilizing the "3 E's – Education, Engineering and Enforcement."

"Amtrak and Operation Lifesaver have been partners for many years with the goal of educating the community on the importance of avoiding high-risk behavior on or near railroad crossings and tracks," **Amtrak President Stephen Gardner** said. "We are proud to celebrate Operation Lifesaver in reaching a critical milestone. When you see this distinctive Amtrak locomotive travel through your community, you will be reminded of the importance of rail safety."

"Over the past five decades, Operation Lifesaver and its safety partners have helped reduce railroad crossing incidents by 84 percent, from 12,000 in 1972, the year Operation Lifesaver started, to 1,900 in 2020. But there is still work to be done. Every three hours in the U.S., a person or vehicle is hit by a train," **Operation Lifesaver, Inc. (OLI) Executive Director Rachel Maleh** said. "Thank you to Amtrak for their continued partnership in sharing the rail safety message and for supporting Operation Lifesaver's 50th anniversary with this commemorative locomotive that will travel across the country sharing the rail safety message in a very visual way. Together, we can stop track tragedies."

The locomotive was painted in Operation Lifesaver's rail safety scheme at an Amtrak maintenance facility in Beech Grove, Ind. The locomotive will remain in revenue service on diesel operated routes throughout the Amtrak national network.

**Video:** <https://media.amtrak.com/media-images/amtrak-locomotive-displays-rail-safety-message>

**Photo Gallery:** <https://media.amtrak.com/media-images/amtrak-unveils-one-of-a-kind-locomotive-in-honor-of-50th-anniversary-of-operation-lifesaver/>





# OLI History Cont.

A year after incorporation, in 1987, the board established OLI's Program Development Council, a 33-member advisory council, to bring consensus to the development and implementation of all Operation Lifesaver programs. In 1989, Operation Lifesaver, Inc. opened its national office in Alexandria, Virginia, to serve as a support and referral center for the independent state programs and to act as a liaison to the federal government, other safety organizations and the media.

Funding was secured from the Federal Railroad Administration in 1987 and the Federal Highway Administration in 1988. In 1992, the Operation Lifesaver program received a five-year funding authorization from Congress through the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1993. It provided \$300,000 annually in operating funds for OLI. In 1998, OLI's funding authorization level was increased to \$500,000 annually for the five-year duration of "T-21," the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st century.

Today, Operation Lifesaver's 49 state programs work with nearly 200 trainers and 3,000 volunteer presenters to deliver OL's messages on highway-rail grade crossing and pedestrian safety. Each year more than 2,000,000 Americans, including school children, business leaders, driving schoolteachers, professional truck and bus drivers, school bus drivers, and state fair attendees, hear the message. OL-trained and certified volunteer presenters include locomotive engineers and other railroad employees, law enforcement officers, teachers, retired people, truck drivers, students, and people from all walks of life.

Operation Lifesaver's role is public safety education. OL's mission is to teach people how to make safe decisions around tracks and trains. We want drivers and pedestrians to understand the signs and signals and conditions they might encounter. Operation Lifesaver also advises people how to report highway-rail grade crossing equipment malfunctions.

## Kansas Incidents

### 2021

#### Trespassing Incidents

13

Deaths

11

Injuries

2

#### Crossings Incidents

28

Deaths

4

Injuries

8

#### Total Incidents

41

Deaths

15

Injuries

10

These numbers are subject to change as the FRA is still investigating cases. Their numbers will be updated as cases close not as incidents happen.

(Updated to Nov 2021)



## KS OL OUT & ABOUT



**Volunteer of the Year Award** presented to Lynn Aldrich for his dedication and 22 years of service to KS OL

John LaGesse's drivers ed presentations seem to frequently end with zipper pull earrings.



Captain Matt Vogt instructing a RISC course to nine area law enforcement officers from multiple agencies.



## FRA Kansas Statistics Last 5 years:

### 2017:

Incidents: 52  
Crossings: 34  
    Fatalities: 5  
Trespass: 18  
    Fatalities: 10

### 2018:

Incidents: 46  
Crossings: 35  
    Fatalities: 5  
Trespass: 11  
    Fatalities: 9

### 2019:

Incidents: 44  
Crossings: 32  
    Fatalities: 5  
Trespass: 12  
    Fatalities: 3

### 2020:

Incidents: 49  
Crossings: 36  
    Fatalities: 9  
Trespass: 13  
    Fatalities: 6

### 2021:\*

Incidents: 41  
Crossings: 28  
    Fatalities: 4  
Trespass: 13  
    Fatalities: 11

*\*(Updated to Nov 2021)*

**EVERY 3 HOURS**

A PERSON OR VEHICLE IS HIT BY A TRAIN.

DON'T BE A STATISTIC

[www.oli.org](http://www.oli.org)

## OLI LAUNCHES ONLINE RAIL SAFETY PLEDGES

WASHINGTON, DC, March 1, 2022 – Operation Lifesaver, the national non-profit rail safety education organization, is continuing the celebration of its 50th anniversary by launching online rail safety pledges for [kids](#) and [adults](#) at the organization’s website, [oli.org](http://oli.org).

“Every three hours in the United States, a person or vehicle is hit by a train. Whether on foot or in a vehicle, we want people to be aware of the risks and empower them to make safe choices around railroad tracks and trains,” said **Operation Lifesaver, Inc. Executive Director Rachel Maleh**.

“Operation Lifesaver’s rail safety pledges for kids and adults are easy to complete and share with family and friends to encourage others to spread the rail safety message,” she continued.

After taking the rail safety pledge online, users can download a Rail Safety Pledge Certificate to remind them of the safe choices they promised to make. Adults also have the option to share the pledge link to social media platforms or via email with family, friends and colleagues.

“We urge everyone to take the Operation Lifesaver rail safety pledge,” Maleh continued. “This simple action to raise rail safety awareness can reduce these preventable crossing and trespass incidents and save lives.”

OLI urges the public to:

- Use increased attention when approaching and crossing railroad tracks
- Know the facts
- Recognize and obey signs and signals
- Cross only at designated crossings whether driving or walking
- Know what to do in the event a vehicle is stalled or stuck on the tracks

“Operation Lifesaver offers free rail safety presentations in communities across the country as well as the opportunity to become a volunteer and make a difference in your community,” Maleh noted. “Visit [oli.org](http://oli.org) today to learn more. Together, we can stop track tragedies,” she concluded.

## UP COMING EVENTS

**June 9th, 2:00:** KS OL Board & Committee Meeting,  
Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library, Menninger Room 206  
[1515 SW 10th Ave, Topeka, KS 66604](#)

**August 11th, 2:00:** KS OL Board & Committee Meeting,  
Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library, Menninger Room 206  
[1515 SW 10th Ave, Topeka, KS 66604](#)

**November 10th, 11:00:** KS OL Board & Committee Meeting (lunch provided),  
Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library, Anton Room 202  
[1515 SW 10th Ave, Topeka, KS 66604](#)