



Sunflower State Signal

Official Publication of Kansas Operation Lifesaver, Inc.

Coordinator's Corner



2023 is off to a great start! Requests for presentations are beginning again. People are back together and congregating. As I was putting together this issue, I got to thinking about the lives we touch with our message, the tragedies we stop but may never know about since we only count the tragedies.

We know all of the horrible statistics: Every three hours a person or vehicle is hit by a train, every 5 days a child dies of a rail related injury, the average person involved in a crossing incident is male age 25-55.

In this "KS OL Out & About" something stuck me. Diversity. Our OLAVs speak to young, old, and everyone in between because we know railroad incidents don't care about demographics, so we care about stopping all track tragedies.

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this issue

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NEWS FROM OLI

WASHINGTON, DC, February 23, 2023 – As national media attention focuses on railroads in the wake of a recent derailment, rail safety education nonprofit Operation Lifesaver, Inc. (OLI) is reminding the public to stay away and stay off tracks, obey traffic warning signs and make safe choices around tracks and trains.

"Only trains belong on tracks. It's illegal and dangerous for people to walk on or be too close to railroad tracks, which are private property," said OLI Executive Director Rachel Maleh. "Vehicle-train collisions at railroad crossings and pedestrians walking on tracks account for 95% of all rail-related deaths. When you see tracks, always think train! Stay off, stay away and stay safe."

Maleh said that drivers and pedestrians should know these facts:

- Railroad tracks and the area around them are private property. Being on and near the tracks is dangerous and illegal.

In hopes of getting ahead of "civilian inspectors" – members of the public walking along tracks inspecting them as a result of the recent derailment

- Trains can run on any track, at any time, in either direction.
- Trains are quieter, moving faster and may be closer than they appear - like an airplane that appears to be hanging still in the sky.
- Trains cannot stop quickly or swerve. There is no steering wheel, and it can take the average freight train traveling 55 MPH a mile or more to stop – the length of 18 football fields.
- Trains always have the right-of-way. Only trains belong on tracks.
- On trestles (train bridges) and in tunnels there is only room for the train.
- Trains overhang tracks.
- Multiple tracks may mean multiple trains.
- More than 60% of vehicle-train collisions occur at active railroad crossings with either crossing lights or gates.



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#STOPTrackTragedies pulled from use

Immediately following the Ohio derailment, the national office pulled the #STOPTrackTragedies hashtag from our social posts because temporarily that tagline could have carried a different meaning. No indication as to when they will begin using it again.



2023 OLI Talking Points Updated

Seven top updated talking points detailed information attached.

- Did you know? Every 3 hours in the U.S., a person or vehicle is hit by a train. That's a staggering statistic for 2023. Whenever you see tracks, you should always think train!
- Operation Lifesaver, Inc. (OLI) is a mission-driven rail safety education nonprofit whose goal is to end collisions, deaths and injuries around railroad tracks and trains.
- We accomplish this goal across the U.S. through education and public awareness efforts while supporting the 3 E's; Education, Engineering and Enforcement.
- When Operation Lifesaver first started in 1972, there were 12,000 railroad crossing incidents each year. We have helped reduce the number of train/motor vehicle collisions by roughly 82%, to approximately 2,170 incidents in 2022.
- In 2022, more than 2,200 people across the U.S. were injured or killed in railroad crossing collisions or trespassing incidents. So, the need for Operation Lifesaver continues.
- Everyone can do something to help #STOPTrackTragedies. Know the facts. Make good choices. Share the rail safety message.
- Visit our website at oli.org. Request a FREE safety presentation. Volunteer with OLI to help stop track tragedies. Check out our wonderful library of rail safety resources. And take the rail safety pledge (there's one for adults and one for children).

Attached to the end of this edition of the Sunflower Signal you will find the detailed five page explanation for the 2023 talking points. Please take a moment and review it. Reminder new materials will be released in June!



Kansas Incidents

2022

Trespassing Incidents

5 injuries

Crossings Incidents*

19

(7 injury, 4 fatality)

*Current through 10/22

2021

Trespassing Incidents

14

Deaths

11

Injuries

3

Crossings Incidents

35

Deaths

5

Injuries

10

Total Incidents

49

Deaths

16

Injuries

12

KS OL OUT & ABOUT:



KS OL was seen and heard at every WSU Basketball game this season.



John Lagesse spent his birthday with 43 great kids at Behind the Wheel Driver Education in Overland Park. HAPPY BIRTHDAY JOHN!!



White Line CDL Training Incorporated School for Professional Truck Drivers in Topeka.



Newton Bible Christian School



Schuetz Driving School New Driver Education and Training Program in



Buckle Up Driving School, LLC's New Driver Education and Training Program in Lawrence

UP COMING EVENTS

June 8th, 1:00 - 3:00: KS OL Board & Committee Meeting, Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library, Perkins Room, 201 [1515 SW 10th Ave, Topeka, KS 66604](https://www.topeka-shawnee.org/1515-SW-10th-Ave)

May 6th, 9 am – 3pm: Safe Kids Day at the Topeka Zoo

June 8th, 1:00 - 3:00: KS OL Board & Committee Meeting, Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library, Perkins Room, 201

April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month!



OLI Talking Points

What is Operation Lifesaver, Inc. (OLI) and why is there a need for OLI?

OLI is a mission-driven rail safety education nonprofit powered by dedicated staff, board members, state coordinators and volunteers whose goal is to empower individuals to make safe choices around tracks and trains. Operation Lifesaver has programs in 47 states and Washington, DC promoting rail safety through education and public awareness efforts supporting the 3 E's: education, engineering and enforcement.

When Operation Lifesaver first started in 1972, there were 12,000 railroad crossing incidents each year. Operation Lifesaver has helped reduce the number of vehicle-train collisions by roughly 82%, to approximately 2,170 incidents in 2022.

Still, in today's busy and distracted society a person or vehicle is hit by a train in the U.S. every 3 hours. So, the need for Operation Lifesaver remains.

Why is this still a concern in 2023?

- Railroads operate 140,000 route miles across the country. There are approximately 212,000 railroad grade crossings in the U.S. Of those crossings, approximately 128,800 are public grade crossings and 83,400 are private grade crossings, meaning they are located on privately owned roads.
- The average locomotive weighs about 200 tons; when a freight train hits a car the impact is like a car hitting a soda can. Even an 18-wheeler is no match for a train. It can take a train a mile or more – the length of 18 football fields – to stop.
- Trespassing along railroad rights-of-way is the leading cause of rail-related deaths in America.
- Railroad crossing incidents are the second leading cause of rail-related deaths in America.
- In our digital society, there are more distractions than ever for drivers and pedestrians, underscoring the need for caution around tracks and trains.
- More than 60% of vehicle-train collisions occur at active railroad crossings with either crossing lights or gates.

What Can Viewers/Listeners/Readers Do to Help?

Make safe choices around railroad tracks and trains. Share the rail message with friends, family and co-workers.

Request a free rail safety presentation at oli.org. OLI provides free rail safety presentations to a variety of audiences to include professional drivers, new drivers, pedestrians, outdoor enthusiasts, teachers, students, shift workers, delivery drivers and more.

Volunteer with us. Become an Operation Lifesaver Authorized Volunteer (OLAV) and help make your community safer.

Find FREE rail safety materials and resources. OLI has assets for all ages – from Public Service Announcements to train track trivia games, videos and lesson plans, all available for FREE at oli.org.

Take the rail safety pledge by visiting our website at oli.org. There's a pledge for adults and one for children. We don't ask for any personal information, and the pledge is easily sharable on social platforms. Join over 3,200 people who have already pledged to make safe choices around railroad tracks and trains.

What Can Viewers/Listeners/Readers Do to Help? (continued)

Are you a first responder? **Sign up for a free Railroad Investigation and Safety Course (RISC)** to learn how first responders can stay safe when responding to incidents on and around railroad property.

Follow us on social – and share our rail safety posts.

Know the facts. Make Safe Choices. Share the rail safety message with your friends, community and family. **Together, we can #STOPTrackTragedies.**

What Should Drivers and Pedestrians Know About Railroad Tracks and Trains?

(Pick your top 3-5 tips. Additional info provided to help answer questions.)

- Every 3 hours in the U.S., a person or vehicle is hit by a train.
- More than 60% of vehicle-train collisions occur at active railroad crossings with either crossing lights or gates.
- Trains can run on any track, at any time, in either direction.
- Trains are quieter, moving faster and may be closer than they appear - like an airplane that appears to be hanging still in the sky.
- Trains cannot stop quickly or swerve. There is no steering wheel and it can take the average freight train traveling 55 MPH a mile or more to stop – the length of 18 football fields.
- Trains always have the right-of-way. Only trains belong on the tracks.
- **Almost all railroad crossings have a Blue and White sign** (called the Emergency Notification System sign) with a phone number for the railroad and a crossing identification number.
 - o Stuck or stalled on the tracks? **GET OUT! GET AWAY! FIND THE BLUE AND WHITE SIGN.** Get everyone out of the vehicle immediately and look for the Blue and White ENS sign. Call the number and share the location ID so they can get a message to the train. No sign? Call 911.
- Railroad tracks and the area around them are private property. Being on and near the tracks is dangerous and illegal.
- On trestles (train bridges) and in tunnels there is only room for the train. Stay off! Stay away! Stay safe!
- Trains overhang tracks.
- Multiple tracks may mean multiple trains.
- There are 140,000 miles of rail across the U.S. You are very likely to encounter tracks and trains throughout your lifetime. It's important to know the facts and make safe decisions.
- Whenever you See Tracks, (Always) Think Train!

Operation Lifesaver Tips for Drivers and Pedestrians

- **Know the signs and signals.** Always cross legally and safely.
 - o Designated crossings are the only safe and legal place to cross railroad tracks – for both drivers and pedestrians.
 - o Obey the crossing signals. If the lights are flashing and/or gates are down – a train is coming (whether you can see or hear it or not) and you must stop.
 - o Always look for a train – trains always have the right-of-way. Never trespass, go around flashing lights and gates or go across the tracks at other locations.
- **Wait, Look Both Ways**
 - o Always expect a train.
 - o Trains may be closer and traveling faster than they appear.
 - o Trains can run on any track at any time in either direction.
 - o Multiple tracks may mean multiple trains.
 - o Ensure you can clearly see down the tracks in both directions before proceeding and that your vehicle will completely clear the tracks. **NEVER TRY TO BEAT A TRAIN.**
 - o Avoid crossing while lights are flashing or gates are down.
 - o See Tracks? Think Train!
- **Avoid Getting Stuck**
 - o Avoid stopping on railroad tracks.
 - o Before crossing, be sure there is space on the other side to completely clear the tracks.
 - o Avoid shifting gears while crossing.
 - o Trains overhang tracks. When driving leave at least 15 feet between the front and rear of your vehicle and the nearest rail.
 - o Know before you go. Plan ahead. Know if you are driving a low clearance vehicle that might get hung up on the tracks.
- **Get Out! Get Away! Find the Blue and White Sign**
 - o If your vehicle gets stuck or stalls at a crossing, get everyone out and far away immediately, even if you do not see a train.
 - o Call the number on the Blue and White Emergency Notification System (ENS) sign and share the crossing ID number with the dispatcher.
 - o No sign? Dial 911.

Recent State and U.S. Crossing and Trespass Statistics (Preliminary)

Source: Federal Railroad Administration

NOTE: You can find more statistics for highway-rail grade crossing collisions and trespass injuries and deaths at [oli.org](https://www.fra.dot.gov/trackstatistics) under Track Statistics.

2022 TOP 5 STATES for highway-rail grade crossing collisions. More info and full list available at [oli.org](https://www.fra.dot.gov/trackstatistics) under Track Statistics. Preliminary; updated as of 3/1/2023.

RANK	STATE	COLLISIONS	DEATHS	INJURIES
1	Texas	239	30	71
2	California	171	43	38
3	Illinois	148	25	45
4	Florida	117	21	51
5	Indiana	101	19	28

2022 TOP 5 STATES for trespassing deaths and injuries combined. More info and full list available at [oli.org](https://www.fra.dot.gov/trackstatistics) under Track Statistics. Preliminary; updated as of 3/1/2023.

RANK	STATE	DEATHS + INJURIES	DEATHS	INJURIES
1	California	267	170	97
2	Texas	141	57	84
3	Florida	74	50	24
4	New York	71	34	37
5	Illinois	62	39	23

U.S. Statistics 2022 (Preliminary, Source: Federal Railroad Administration)

- Vehicle-train collisions have dropped 82% over the past 50 years; Operation Lifesaver has played a vital role in that achievement.
- While vehicle-train fatalities have shown steady improvement, the number of pedestrians killed while trespassing on railroad tracks increased from 457 in 1980 to 675 in 2022.
- Since 1997, annual pedestrian trespass deaths have exceeded vehicle-train fatalities. Operation Lifesaver is working with its safety partners to find new ways to address the rise in trespass-related incidents.
- In 2022, according to preliminary Federal Railroad Administration statistics, there were 2,178 crossing incidents nationwide, up 1.5% from 2021.
- Crossing-related fatalities in 2022 rose 16.7% from the same period in the previous year to 273.
- Crossing-related injuries in 2022 rose 12.5% from the same period in 2021, to 763.
- In 2022, there were a total of 1,230 trespass-related deaths plus injuries nationwide, an increase of 10.5% from the same period in 2021.
- Trespass-related fatalities in 2022 rose 14.6% from the previous year to 675.
- Trespass-related injuries in 2022 rose 5.9% from the previous year to 555.

Who shares the rail safety message in my state? State Coordinators, OLAVs and Partners

- Operation Lifesaver has programs in 47 states plus Washington, DC, led by **State Coordinators** (<https://oli.org/state-coordinators>) sharing the rail safety message on the state and local level.
- OLI provides FREE rail safety presentations for the general public, school groups, new drivers, community audiences, professional drivers, school bus drivers, outdoor enthusiasts, pedestrians, farmers, law enforcement, emergency responders and more. Request a free presentation at oli.org.
- **Operation Lifesaver Authorized Volunteers (OLAVs)** give rail safety presentations customized by audience. OLAVs are passionate about making their communities safer and are an integral part of our mission to save lives through education. **Volunteer at oli.org.**
- **Safety partners** around the nation and across the globe share the rail safety message.
 - o Thank you to Operation Lifesaver State Coordinators working every day sharing the rail safety message throughout their states to #STOPTrackTragedies.
 - o Thank you to our Operation Lifesaver rail safety partners – including federal agencies, private funders, railroads, other safety organizations like the National Safety Council and Safe Kids Worldwide – for sharing the rail safety message and expanding outreach across the nation.

How does Operation Lifesaver Share the Rail Safety Message?

- Operation Lifesaver's public education and awareness campaigns use **innovative marketing and digital communications to educate people about staying safe near tracks and trains.**
 - o **Public Service Announcements (PSAs)** and videos with customized rail safety messages are easily accessible and shareable – audiences include new drivers, delivery drivers, transit riders, college students, shift workers and mature drivers to name a few. **New for 2023** – OLI is working on PSAs for young transit riders, risk takers and county/state employees working near tracks and trains.
 - o OLI's **Stop Track Tragedies campaign** shares real-life stories about the importance of making safe choices around railroad tracks and trains. Visit oli.org/stop-track-tragedies to learn more and watch the videos.
 - o An extensive list of rail safety resources is available under the INFO FOR tab at oli.org – tailored for a variety of audiences from pre-K through high school students, professional drivers and school bus drivers to educators, parents, farmers and more.
 - o OLI offers **educational materials** including gamified learning experiences (like our online Train Safety Savvy Game), lesson plans, stories, activity guides and educational videos for children, families and educators in grades pre-K to 12 as well as rail safety resources for 4-H and National FFA Organization groups.
 - o **Coming in 2023** – updated eLearning programs for school bus drivers and professional drivers as well as new coloring/activity booklets for young transit riders.
 - o **Visit our State Contacts page** at oli.org/state-coordinators to connect with your local Operation Lifesaver program.

About Operation Lifesaver

Operation Lifesaver is a nonprofit public safety education and awareness organization dedicated to stopping track tragedies. For more than 50 years, Operation Lifesaver programs have saved lives via public awareness campaigns and a network of trained volunteers across the U.S. who give free presentations encouraging safe behavior near railroad tracks and trains. The Operation Lifesaver, Inc. (OLI) national office supports the efforts of state programs in 47 states and the District of Columbia. Explore OLI's virtual library of rail safety materials on the oli.org website. Learn more about OLI, the annual observance of Rail Safety Week, how to request a free presentation and become a volunteer. Follow OLI on social media via Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Twitter and YouTube.