



Drivers Urged to “Respect the Train” this Memorial Day Weekend

Operation Lifesaver, Inc. offers rail safety tips for drivers

Contacts: DeQuendre Bertrand, [703-739-0284](tel:703-739-0284), Carol Steckbeck, [919-303-5140](tel:919-303-5140), news@oli.org

View the release online: <http://bit.ly/130eZKI>

Alexandria, Va. — Expect more traffic and drive mindfully around railroad and transit tracks. That’s the message the nonprofit rail safety education group Operation Lifesaver, Inc. (www.oli.org) has for the AAA-estimated 31.2 million travelers who will hit the roads for the unofficial opening of summer this Memorial Day weekend. Operation Lifesaver encourages drivers to be safe while traveling near or passing through the more than 130,000 public rail crossings across the nation.

“Drivers are bombarded with messages to avoid talking or texting on their cell phones, and to drive soberly, but many lives have also been lost due to the preventable error of drivers misjudging their ability to get across the tracks before a train comes,” says Joyce Rose, president and CEO of Operation Lifesaver. “It’s our mission to make respecting trains an automatic driving habit.”

Last year, according to the latest preliminary statistics, 1,960 collisions took place at rail crossings and took 271 lives. Here’s a look at the collision data for the past five Mays from the Federal Railroad Administration’s Office of Safety Analysis.

May	Total Monthly Collisions	Approximate # of Collisions Surrounding Memorial Day Weekend
2012	144	35
2011	149	30
2010	162	28
2009	142	25
2008	215	38

Although railroad grade crossing incidents are less common than other vehicle crashes, Rose noted that crossing incidents have the potential for catastrophic consequences for communities including traumatic loss of life, dire economic effects and a severe toll on highway and rail traffic.

“Our message is easy to remember,” says Rose. “Trains and cars don’t mix. That train is closer than you think, and it’s moving faster than you think.”

The average freight train traveling at 55 miles per hour needs the length of 18 football fields to stop — after the engineer applies the emergency brake. More safety tips and resources are available for drivers on Operation Lifesaver’s website, at <http://oli.org/education-resources/driving-safety-tips>.

Operation Lifesaver has a network of volunteers who provide rail safety education to professional drivers, law enforcement, first responders, schools and the general public. To schedule an Operation Lifesaver presentation for your group or organization, please contact your OL State Coordinator (http://oli.org/state_coordinators/).

About Operation Lifesaver

Operation Lifesaver’s mission is to end collisions, deaths and injuries at highway-rail grade crossings and along railroad rights of way. A national network of trained volunteers provides free presentations on rail safety. Learn more at <http://www.oli.org>; follow OLI on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Pinterest](#).

-end-

703-739-0284 or news@oli.org

About Operation Lifesaver - Operation Lifesaver, Inc. is a national, non-profit safety education group whose goal is to eliminate deaths and injuries at railroad crossings and along railroad rights of way. Operation Lifesaver has programs in all 50 states, with trained volunteers who provide free safety talks to community groups, school bus drivers, truck drivers and student drivers to raise awareness of the dangers around railroad tracks and trains. For more information, or to request a free safety presentation, visit www.oli.org, or follow OLI on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/operation.lifesaver>, Twitter: [@olinational](https://twitter.com/olinational), and Pinterest: <http://pinterest.com/olinational/>.