



U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS/SAFETY CENTER

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Danger 'round the bend

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Accidents involving trains and Soldiers always favor the trains.

Crossing railroad tracks, whether by vehicle or on foot, is generally pretty uneventful. But when things go wrong, the consequences can be swift and tragic. Five Soldiers have died and three seriously injured in accidents at railroad crossings since 2000, a figure that may seem small but has had huge repercussions for the Families and Soldiers left behind.

"Military men and women are trained to assess danger, but at a railroad crossing it's easy to think you're safe when you're not," explained Helen Sramek, president of Operation Lifesaver, a nonprofit rail safety outreach organization. "You have an illusion of safety, but trains may be closer and moving faster than they appear from your vantage point at the crossing."

Fortunately, staying safe around railroad crossings is relatively simple — it all boils down to situational awareness.

According to Operation Lifesaver, the only safe place for pedestrians to negotiate railroad tracks is at a designated public crossing with a cross buck, gate, or flashing red lights guarding the way. Keep in mind that trains can often take a mile or more to come to a complete stop, so trying to outrun an approaching locomotive or walk around, behind or under lowered gates or cross against flashing lights is a bad idea. Also remember that even after a train passes, another could be coming close behind from either direction.

Portable music players and earphones present another hazard for pedestrians at railroad crossings. Always remove earphones and look both ways for approaching trains and other traffic before crossing the tracks. And, as with driving, the mental and physical impairments induced by alcohol can prove deadly while walking, especially near railroad tracks.

Finally, make railroad safety a Family priority. Teach children to respect the dangers of trains and that railroad tracks are not a place to play, walk, run, ride a bike or take a shortcut home.

For more information on pedestrian safety, visit <https://safety.army.mil>.