

WASHINGTON



UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

Consumer Help Line
888-333-WUTC (9882)
consumer@utc.wa.gov

TTY
800-416-5289

Education and Outreach
360-664-1110

Media Line
360-664-1116

The UTC regulates the services of privately or investor owned utility and transportation companies. Our mission is to ensure that services are fairly priced, available, reliable and safe.

Regulated companies:

- Telephone
- Electricity
- Natural Gas
- Water
- Garbage
- Recycling
- Residential Movers
- Charter Buses
- Airport Shuttles
- Commercial Ferries
- Natural Gas Pipeline

General Information

360-664-1160
www.utc.wa.gov

PO Box 47250
1300 S Evergreen Pk Dr SW
Olympia WA 98504



Staying Safe Around Trains and Tracks

The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) investigates train accidents, inspects railroad crossings, approves rail-safety projects, and manages Operation Lifesaver, a statewide rail-safety education program.

Too often, Washington ranks near the top 15 states for such railroad fatalities. With nearly 6,000 highway railroad crossings, rising population and robust growth in freight and passenger rail traffic, we must do everything we can to reduce the risk of such avoidable tragedies.

Part of the answer lies in prevention — added safety measures such as fencing, signage, gates and signals. But in the end, education about rail safety and common-sense precautions are even more important.

Stay off the tracks

It is illegal to walk on railroad tracks or the rights of way on either side. A locomotive cannot swerve out or stop the train in time to avoid a collision. If you are in the rail yard or on railroad property uninvited, you are trespassing and subject to arrest and prosecution. Worse, you could lose your life.

Look both ways

Always expect a train. Trains can run on any track at any time, in either direction. Modern trains are quieter than ever, an approaching train may be closer and moving faster than it appears. After a train passes, look both ways before proceeding.

Don't get stuck on the tracks

Before you cross, be sure there is room to completely clear the side. Trains overhang the track by at least 3 feet on each side. For safety, leave yourself at least 15 feet between the rear of your vehicle and the nearest rail. Do not shift gears while crossing.

Staying Safe Around Trains and Tracks

Get out and get away

If your vehicle stalls at a crossing, get everyone out and far away immediately, even if you do not see a train. Call the emergency notification number posted on or near the crossing or notify local law enforcement.

Use extra caution with wheelchairs and strollers

Narrow wheels can get caught at crossings. If possible, walk – don't roll – across. If you are in a wheelchair, consider getting assistance. Always cross at a 90-degree angle.

If you see a train coming, wait

Don't be tempted to try to beat a train. An approaching train may be closer and traveling faster than it appears.

Trains cannot stop quickly

The average freight train traveling 55 miles per hour takes a mile or more to stop. That's 18 football fields. If the locomotive engineer can see you, it's too late to stop the train.

Only cross at designated crossings

The only safe place to cross is at a designated public crossing with a cross buck, flashing red lights or a gate. If you cross at any other place you are trespassing and can be ticketed or fined.

Watch for vehicles that must stop at crossings

Most states, including Washington, require school buses, commercial buses and trucks carrying hazardous materials to stop at every highway-rail grade crossing.

Report all problems

Report any problem – stalled vehicle on the tracks, damaged sign, obstructed view, signal malfunction – to the railroad immediately. Call the emergency notification number posted on or near the crossing or notify local law enforcement.

For more information

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To request a free railroad safety presentation, contact Operation Lifesaver at 1-800-537-6224 or visit www.oli.org.



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