

Railway / Municipality Proximity Issues

Glossary

1. Safety and Security

1.1 Highway-Railway Crossings

A highway-railway crossing is the point at which the public or private/farm road used by motorists, pedestrians and cyclists meets the railway right-of-way or train track. A crossing is the only legal and safe place to cross the tracks, and the law requires the road user to give way to the train. There are some 31,000 public and private/farm crossings in Canada to accommodate different users including motor vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians. Public crossings at grade level may include active warning systems (such as automated gates, flashing lights and bells) or passive warnings (such as crossbucks and other signage). The volume of road and train traffic dictates the level of protection. Grade separations (such as bridges and underpasses) are used in particularly high traffic volume areas or locations that pose a special risk. Private/farm crossings may sometimes be protected by non-standard signs. Advancing highway-railway crossing safety involves the 4 E's – engineering, enforcement, education and evaluation. Crossing issues of concern include safety assessments, construction and maintenance, train whistling, safety measures, and reporting of (crossing-related) safety issues.

1.2 Trespassing

Trespassing on rail property is against the law, and a serious safety problem. Too many people take unnecessary risks, and are seriously or fatally injured, while walking on or near railway tracks. Railway infrastructure including tracks, yards, bridges and tunnels are off-limits to the public, and trespassing on railway property is subject to arrest and fines. Long-term trespass prevention strategies involving a wide range of stakeholders working together have been put in place. These include the public education efforts of the Operation Lifesaver program, and Transport Canada Outreach programs which include community trespass prevention initiatives. This latter initiative works with varied stakeholders to identify and address the causes of trespassing within local communities. Planning for safe, trespass-free design in existing and new urban development near railway property is also an important form of proactive trespassing prevention. Access control methods include targeted fencing and signage to inform and illustrate risk to the public. Successful trespass prevention initiatives also involve the 4 E's: education (of the public), engineering (proper design and infrastructure for access control), enforcement (by police), and evaluation (planning by railway and municipality). Trespassing issues of concern include safety assessments, construction and maintenance, safety measures and snowmobilers/ATV users who travel in the vicinity of railway tracks.

1.3 Train Accidents

Railways provide the safest means of surface transportation in Canada. Train accidents do occur, however, and include train collisions and derailments and occurrences involving the transportation of dangerous goods. The majority of such accidents occur during switching operations in yards and sidings where speeds are slow and the risk of spillage is low. Transport Canada oversees railway safety and monitors compliance with the Railway Safety Act. The railways also have their own safety programs. The Transportation Safety Board is responsible for investigating occurrences involving railways under federal jurisdiction. They collect related data and report upon their analyses and findings. If systemic and other deficiencies are identified, they may make recommendations to Transport Canada (and the railways) for advancing safety. Provincially regulated railways have similar safety systems and

procedures in place. Train accident issues include statistics (measuring accident risk), emergency response (after an accident) and safety programs (prevention).

1.4 Dangerous Goods

Chemicals are a way of life in today's society. Everything from food to medications, clothing and vehicles are dependent on chemicals. In their original form, however, many chemicals are considered hazardous to human health and the environment. A key component of getting these hazardous or 'dangerous' goods to consumers is the transportation cycle. Each year there are hundreds of thousands of dangerous goods shipments originating in Canada and although the public is concerned about dangerous goods release or spillage, about 99.99% of all these shipments by rail arrive at their destination incident-free. Railways, shippers and regulators all work diligently to ensure maximum safety in the transport of these goods. The Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, which is overseen by Transport Canada, sets out strict standards, rules and prescriptive regulations for dangerous good transportation. Railway companies also have programs in place to ensure their safe transportation and for community outreach. These include rigorous inspections of cars, placarding of contents, audits, use of new technologies in the design of tank cars (such as head shields and improved tank steels), safety committees and the identification of best practices. The Railway Association of Canada has a team of dangerous goods specialists who work with the railways and chemical shippers to ensure that railway vehicle standards and regulations are maintained. This team acts as a resource to the rail and chemical industries in ensuring that the public, municipalities and emergency responders recognize the various aspects of safety and security that govern railway operations. There is also a rail industry partnership with the Canadian Chemical Producers Association and their TransCAER® (Transportation Community Awareness Emergency Response) community outreach program. Dangerous goods related issues include: their transportation and storage; accidents and emergency response; safety measures; and community outreach.

1.5 Security Measures

Rail has traditionally been a very safe and secure mode of transportation. Railways are experienced and well equipped to handle all emergency situations. The rail industry has a stable, well trained, closely supervised workforce, with the larger railways having permanent security forces that work in partnership with public local police officers. Working closely with governments and communities, the railways ensure security measures are consistently applied and that relevant security information is shared to mitigate and prevent acts of vandalism or terrorism. They have instituted a number of passenger rail security initiatives, and developed overall security alert levels similar to those in the US. The Railway Association of Canada plays a significant coordinating role in managing security by: sharing information; liaising with government agencies (in Canada and the US) and the Association of American Railroads; and being involved in public relations activities, industry training initiatives, cross border issues and the identification of "best practices". Under a Memorandum of Understanding with Transport Canada, railways must provide Transport Canada with details on their security measures, emergency plans, exercises to test their plans, and report upon security incidents to the Transportation Safety Board. There are several other ongoing initiatives on security involving Transport Canada, other government agencies and the private sector. Security measures issues include policing, penalties, complaints and emergency plans.
