

April 15, 2016

RE: Community Events near Railroad Crossings

TO ALL CITIES & COUNTIES

As warm weather approaches, we begin to think about the outdoor festivities we look forward to every year. We all enjoy the events that bring our communities together for fun and celebration and want them to be conducted in an enjoyable and safe manner. The Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT), Office of Rail Transportation, would like to remind communities and celebration organizers of some safety items related to railroads and their operations. These reminders are provided for the benefit and safety of the friends, families, and visitors within your communities.

Although passenger trains have a general schedule; the movement of freight can occur any time of the day or night. SEE TRACKS, THINK TRAIN! Please remember that the railroads serving Iowa present a significant benefit to the economy of our state and are a critical part of our state's transportation network.

The railroads request that event organizers contact them whenever a planned event is expected to increase vehicle or pedestrian traffic on or around a railroad's right-of-way. The railroads can't suspend train traffic, but they may be able to adjust their operations to make your celebration safer. This is especially important any time a parade or other event passageway is expected to use an at-grade railroad crossing. An online list of specific railroad contacts is available at: <http://www.iowadot.gov/railcontacts>

It is also important to remember that local law enforcement should remain vigilant for pedestrians trespassing within the railroad right-of-way or other suspicious activities near railroad tracks. Any unauthorized presence on this private property is illegal. And yet, for convenience we may be more inclined to illegally walk in the railroad right-of-way "*just this once.*" These "shortcuts" may seem innocent, but every year the state of Iowa experiences trespasser casualties.

The Office of Rail Transportation is concerned about the safety of these events. We encourage all organizers and law enforcement agencies to schedule an Operation Lifesaver (OL) presentation. These presentations are provided by OL certified volunteers at no charge. To schedule a presentation, please visit the website at: [www.iowaoperationlifesaver.org](http://www.iowaoperationlifesaver.org).

If you have an emergency or see unsafe railroad conditions, call the telephone number on the Emergency Notification Sign located on the crossbuck post or signal mast (see example below).

**Figure 8B-5. Example of an  
Emergency Notification Sign**



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For further information or assistance on how you can make your event safer around railroads, feel free to call the Office of Rail Transportation, Phil Meraz, at 515-239-1420.

Although you may never hear the appreciation for an incident that doesn't happen because of the safety measures you've taken, the Iowa DOT, the railroads, and the families and friends of the people who may be saved, thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tamara Nicholson".

Tamara Nicholson, Director  
Office of Rail Transportation  
Iowa Department of Transportation