

# Safety First: Photography Near Tracks & Trains

*Operation Lifesaver, Inc.*

Webinar with Professional Photographers of America  
October 22, 2015



# What is Operation Lifesaver?

- The nation's nonprofit rail safety education organization
- Mission: To end collisions, deaths and injuries where roadways cross train tracks, and on railroad rights-of-way.



# A stunning statistic

About every **3 hours** in the United States, a person or vehicle is hit by a train.



OPERATION  
LIFESAVER<sup>®</sup>  
Look, Listen & Live



**EVERY 3 HOURS**  
a person or vehicle is struck by a train.

LEARN MORE >>

[www.oli.org](http://www.oli.org)

# Another stunning statistic

Nearly **500 people killed**,  
more than **400 people**  
**injured** while trespassing  
in 2014\*



\*preliminary data from Federal Railroad Administration



# A concerning trend

# Tragic results of the trend



**5 people killed and injured** taking photos on tracks in 2014



**5 people killed** taking photos and videos on tracks so far in 2015

# Tragic results of the trend

PetaPixel June 2014

“A **photographer lost his life** last Saturday during a photo shoot on the Union Pacific U.S. Highway 50 overpass in Sedalia, MO when [a] train came around a blind corner and couldn’t stop in time to avoid hitting him.”

**The Fresno Bee** July 2015

“A **25-year-old male photographer** was photographing a model on some railroad tracks in Downtown Fresno when he was struck and **killed instantly** by a northbound train.”

# Six Must-Know Facts About Photographing Around Tracks and Trains





**TOUCHDOWN**

**IT CAN TAKE THE LENGTH OF  
18 FOOTBALL FIELDS  
TO STOP A TRAIN.**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**See Tracks? Think Train!**

**TOUCHDOWN**

See Tracks?  
**THINK  
TRAIN**

1. **Trains can't stop quickly to avoid people or vehicles on the tracks.**



2. An optical illusion makes it hard to determine a train's distance from you - and its speed.



3. The average train overhangs the track by at least three feet.



4. Railroad tracks, trestles, yards and rights-of-way are private property, whether or not you see a No Trespassing sign.



**5. No tracks should be assumed to be abandoned or inactive.**

# The Washington Post



Natalie and Sarah go to Clarksburg High School, where they are honor roll students and play varsity field hockey, and where this year Sarah signed up for a photography class. One of her first assignments: Take a series of photos that would illustrate pushing forward in life. **The twins had been on the railroad tracks before and said in an interview that they felt they would be safe.**

- 6. People mimic your actions when they see your photos on the web or social media.**

# What You Can Do – Stay Safe

- Find alternative locations for your photographs
  - Get creative about other scenic locations that don't endanger you and your clients
  - Find public property near a railroad that allows you to capture the track or train while staying safe



# What You Can Do – Stay Safe

- Respect private property rights. Would you want another photographer using your studio without permission?
- If you are interested in a railroad setting, always contact the railroad company first. Some will accommodate requests or provide alternative safe locations to meet your needs.



# What You Can Do – Spread the Word

- Share the #NoPhotosOnTrainTracks safety message with peers and colleagues through blogs, social media and direct conversation



# What You Can Do – Spread the Word

- If posting photos that were taken safely on tracks, ALWAYS use a disclaimer to reinforce the message:
  - “These tracks were confirmed inactive by the railroad”
  - “These portraits were staged at a railroad museum”
  - “This photo was taken on safe public property adjacent to the railroad tracks”

# Let's continue the conversation



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