



May 7, 2008

To the Editor:

As the warm weather approaches and more and more people are enjoying the beautiful outdoors, it's a great time to remind your readers to be safe around our Commonwealth's railroad tracks. Unfortunately each year far too many Pennsylvanians are injured or killed because they are carelessly trespassing on railroad property. Yes, trespassing. Railroad tracks, trestles, yards and equipment are private property. Walking, playing or riding recreational vehicles on or near them can be illegal and extremely dangerous.

In July 2004, Governor Rendell signed into law HB 1117 which provides for the criminal liability of anyone interfering or vandalizing railroad facilities including those who try to stowaway or ride the interior or exterior of trains or those who operate their recreational vehicles or cars in a way that disrupts railroad operations. It also makes it illegal for a person to damage or destroy railroad property. It's ironic that often times the very signs that may be posted for the public's well-being are the ones vandalized or stolen.

Last year 23 trespass fatalities occurred in Pennsylvania which gave us the dubious rank of fifth highest in the nation. As a comparison, there were only 5 fatalities at highway-rail crossings in PA last year. One fatality is far too many, and these senseless deaths could have been avoided. Remember the only legal place to cross tracks is at a designated pedestrian or roadway crossing. Always look both ways and only proceed quickly when you are sure there is no rail traffic coming either way. Also, never ride ATV's, snowmobiles or other recreational vehicles on or near the railroad right of way. It could save you a hefty fine and very well may save your life.

If your readers have any questions about being safe around railroad tracks they can log onto Operation Lifesaver, a nationwide non-profit organization dedicated to reducing collisions, injuries and fatalities around our nations railroad tracks, at [www.oli.org](http://www.oli.org) They are a great resource to help keep our fellow Pennsylvanians safe around railroad tracks.

Remember, staying off railroad tracks and property isn't just smart, it's the law.  
Hopefully with a little more awareness we can reduce the number of terrible accidents by  
staying off railroad property the entire year.

Sincerely,

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