



The SAFE use of Unattended Railway Level Crossings

Foreword

An Unattended Railway Level Crossing is one where the user opens and shuts the gates. These level crossings are also commonly known as Accommodation Level Crossings. Some of them are located on public roads. Clauses 20.2 and 20.6 of this booklet give more detailed definitions.

This booklet does not necessarily cover every situation that may arise in the course of using a level crossing.

It is the responsibility of the user to ensure that it is safe to cross and that the railway and other users of the railway are not endangered.

This Booklet is issued by **Iarnród Éireann/Irish Rail**
Connolly Station
Dublin 1

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Knowing the dangers



- 1.1 Trains travel fast and cannot stop suddenly. A fast train may take between 1/2 mile and one mile to stop.
- 1.2 Shut and fasten all gates at all times. Leaving gates open can result in children or animals wandering on to the line and may encourage unsuspecting drivers of vehicles to go straight on to the level crossing before checking that it is safe to do so. Unfamiliar crossing users or visiting public are more at risk when using Unattended Railway Level Crossings, this is why members of the public are not allowed to use field to field type crossing
- 1.3 Trains can be very silent and this is particularly the case on modern continuously welded rails. Be very careful in windy weather as wind can mask the noise of approaching trains. Deafness, the use of headphones with personal stereos and the use of car radios will affect your ability to hear approaching trains. Remember the wearing of ear protectors will also affect your ability to hear trains. Mobile phones must not be used during the process of working the crossing.

- 1.4 Be aware that weather conditions such as mist, fog, or snow, as well as vegetation growth may affect the warning you receive of approaching trains.
- 1.5 Animals can behave in an unpredictable fashion. See section 11 of this booklet.
- 1.6 Collisions between trains and animals, including cattle, have resulted in derailments.
- 1.7 Crossing the line with slow, heavy, low-slung or cumbersome vehicles, vehicles conveying dangerous substances and with herds of animals needs special protection. See sections 11, 15 and 16 of this booklet.
- 1.8 Level crossing features, such as gates, surfaces, and gradients should be suitable for the vehicles or animals being taken across the line. If in doubt, contact Iarnród Éireann in advance. Use one of the telephone numbers given at the end of this booklet.
- 1.9 Always be very careful during the hours of darkness as confusion may arise between the lights of approaching cars and trains.
- 1.10 Every time you cross the railway remember the Stop, Look, Listen rule.



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Knowing your crossing

- 2.1 Note the crossing number 'line and location of your crossing. (See section 22)
- 2.2 Be aware of any dangers that the crossing may hold for you. See also section 21 of this booklet.
- 2.3 Once the gates are safely opened, do not enter the crossing if there is anything on the far side of it that may impede your safe passage across the railway, causing you to stop on the crossing, in the path of a train. Make sure that you do not have to stop until you are well clear of the railway.
- 2.4 Warn other users about the crossing and advise them to take care. This includes family members, those delivering goods, service people, doctors, employees, agricultural contractors, tenants and any others who may call to your home or farm.



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Knowing the railway

- 3.1 As stated previously, trains cannot stop quickly. A train travelling at 100 mph will cover 1/4 mile in 9 seconds and a train going at 60 mph will cover the same distance in 15 seconds.
- 3.2 A train overhangs the rails by a considerable amount. **Never** assume that a train is only as wide as the space between the rails.
- 3.3 Do not rely on any railway signals, provided for the control of trains, to give you a guarantee that there is no train approaching.
- 3.4 Remember unattended accommodation level crossings* **are not** protected by signals. A train driver has no knowledge of your presence on the crossing.
- 3.5 Do not make assumptions because you are familiar with the train schedules. Trains can be delayed or indeed can be early, and additional train movements may take place.

*See section 20.2 and section 20.6

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The speed of trains

- 5.1 Each railway line has its own maximum permitted train speed. This is reviewed periodically. As track relaying and other railway improvements take place train speeds may be increased.
- 5.2 The permitted train speed may be reduced for a period of time for maintenance reasons. When work has been completed the permitted speed will be increased again.
- 5.3 The actual speed of a train will depend on a number of factors such as the type of train and the location along the line.
- 5.4 Always use the level crossing in such a manner that takes account of the **fastest** train.
- 5.5 If in doubt, contact the Infrastructure Managers (see section 22) for information on the current maximum speed of trains at the crossing.
- 5.6 Remember that even at slow speed a train cannot stop quickly.

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Viewing distances to trains

- 6.1 A train travelling at 100 mph will cover 1/4 mile in 9 seconds and a train going at 60 mph will cover the same distance in 15 seconds.
- 6.2 Iarnród Éireann endeavours to maintain maximum sighting distances by trimming banks and cutting grass, bushes and trees. Please ring Iarnród Éireann if views are being obscured. See section 22.6 for the Infrastructure Manager's location and telephone number. Always quote the crossing number.
- 6.3 In some locations, bridges, buildings and embankments may restrict the available views of trains. In these cases a whistle board is erected to warn train drivers to sound the hooter, when approaching.
- 6.4 If you see a train approaching or hear the hooter sounding do not use the crossing. Clear the line immediately of any movement under way.

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Using the crossing and securing the gates



- 7.1 It is the responsibility of the user to ensure that it is safe to cross and that the railway and other users of the railway are not endangered.
- 7.2 Stop clear of the railway line where you get a good view along the track in both distances. Look for the approach of trains, especially in poor visibility or at night. Watch out for the light on an approaching train. Listen for horns or the sound of an approaching train.

When using the level crossing, open both gates before attempting to bring a vehicle or herd of animals across the railway line. Open the opposite gate first.

- 7.3 Before attempting to cross, always examine the railway from the best vantage point to check for approaching trains. If the location of your crossing is such that a good view is not available, you should provide yourself with the necessary assistance to enable the maximum view to be obtained. Shut and fasten the gates immediately after using the crossing.

7: Using the crossing and securing the gates

- 7.4 The crossing of members of the public at field to field crossings is not allowed as it is not a normal agricultural activity.
- 7.5 In the case of field crossings make sure that the crossing gates are shut with their bolts home in the slapping posts and that they are padlocked when not in use.
- 7.6 With occupation level crossings (see section 20.6), whilst the padlocking of gates may not be practical due to the number of authorised users, there must be strict compliance with the rule regarding the shutting and fastening of gates after use.



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Using the crossing and securing the gates



- 7.7 Never lend the padlock key for the crossing gates nor permit the crossing to be used by another party on your behalf unless you are absolutely satisfied that these instructions have been fully read and understood and that such a person is fully aware of the responsibilities involved.
- 7.8 Whenever possible, do not use the level crossing during the inclement weather which may restrict your mobility or may affect your ability to see an approaching train. Such conditions include snow, fog, floods and the like. If you must cross, take extra care.
- 7.9 Should a vehicle suffer a breakdown or become grounded on the crossing, make sure that everybody gets out and gets clear of the line, then telephone or otherwise warn Iarnród Éireann of the danger immediately by the best available means.



22.1 **Emergency**

In case of any emergency telephone the controlling signalman using the telephone number supplied at the level crossing.

22.2 **Permission to cross, where required**

For permission where required to cross the railway, call the controlling signalman using the telephone number supplied at the level crossings.

22.3 **Contacting IÉ**

For additional copies of this booklet see www.irishrail.ie or contact your local Infrastructure Manager, enquires regarding the level crossing you use or reporting of damaged to level crossing infrastructure contact the relevant Infrastructure Manager in your area:

- Infrastructure Manager Athlone (covers the west of the country) 090 6487711
- Infrastructure Manager Dublin (covers the North & East of the country) 01 7033651
- Infrastructure Manager Limerick Junction (covers the South & South West of the Country) 062 51083