Rail Crossing Incidents

Rail Crossing Incidents: Number of highway/railroad at-grade incidents

Our strategy
A priority for ODOT is to have the safest infrastructure possible. Safe infrastructure is promoted by implementing design practices that mitigate structural safety risks on Oregon’s transportation system. There are several ODOT activities specific to the Rail Section associated with this general strategy. The Crossing Safety Unit manages crossing improvement projects and inspects crossings to ensure they are appropriately maintained. The Rail Section works with public and private entities, including the railroad companies, public road authorities and law enforcement to address crossing safety concerns and participate in transportation planning activities to improve the mobility of highway and rail traffic.

About the target
The Rail Section strives for a zero incident performance. The goal reflects the reality that some number of incidents is outside the control of the section and its transportation safety partners.

How we are doing and how we compare
In 2018, 19 rail crossing incidents occurred, which under-performed our goal of 10. The incident data in the table for 2018 includes 10 incidents involving motor vehicles, four incidents involving bicyclists and five incidents involving pedestrians. The bicycle and pedestrian incidents resulted in six injuries and two fatalities. In 2018, there were 19 rail crossing incidents, a decrease from 22 in 2017, and an increase from 18 in 2016, 15 in 2015 and 14 in 2014. Since 2009, rail crossing incidents have varied between a high of 22 in 2017 and a low of 6 in 2009 with an overall increase from 2009 to 2018. This trend indicates a need for additional public awareness and education programs highlighting causes of potential at-grade incidents.

Fact
Crossing incidents have decreased significantly in the last two decades, from 28 in 1996 to 19 in 2018
Factors affecting results and what needs to be done

Some incidents are caused by deliberate actions rather than lack of safety education or crossing safety devices. Of the 19 incidents in 2018, 12 occurred on the freight rail system and 7 were on TriMet light rail. 1 of the incidents involved a passenger train. The 19 incidents resulted in 2 fatalities and 6 injuries. 5 incidents involved pedestrians and bicyclists and resulted in the 2 fatalities. 5 of the incidents involved vehicles stopped on the tracks and 12 incidents involved road users (pedestrian and vehicle) failing to stop for STOP signs or activated signals. 1 fatality involved pedestrian purposely stepping into the path of the moving train. 3 incidents involved pedestrians stepping into the crossing after one MAX train had passed, and into the path of a second train.

Options to promote a decline in the number of incidents include maintaining inspection efforts, increasing funding for crossing investments and increasing education outreach on crossing safety to the driving public and pedestrians.

About the data
The reporting cycle is calendar year. The data is based upon incident reports submitted by the railroads to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), and incident reports submitted by the transit agencies to the State Safety Oversight (SSO) program.

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Data source
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