

Industry Alert—Hazard

Log truck drives through stop sign, narrowly missed by freight train

What happened?

After weighing in at a lumber yard, a log truck drove off the weigh scales and proceeded toward a railway crossing. The truck drove through the railway crossing without stopping and was narrowly missed by an oncoming freight train. According to several witnesses, the truck and train would likely have collided if the train had not been slowing down in order to drop off a load of logs at the lumber mill.

Why did it happen?

Unlike level railway crossings on public highways, crossings on logging roads and lumber mill property are generally not equipped with flashing lights, bells or gates. In this case the crossing had a stop sign, as required by Section 117(c)(v) of the Regulations for Industrial Establishments, but the truck failed to stop. The relatively slow speed of the freight train was the main reason no collision occurred.

According to the Transportation Safety Board of Canada, drivers of road vehicles are responsible for most train-vehicle collisions. Transport Canada reported 278 such collisions across the country in 2001, resulting in 41 fatalities and 47 injuries. Many of these collisions occurred at fully-equipped public crossings, which points to the conclusion that some drivers don't take the risk of colliding with a train seriously enough.

How can it be prevented?

After the incident, the lumber company decided to place larger stop signs at the crossing and issued a reminder that all vehicles approaching the railway crossing must come to a complete stop and check for approaching trains before proceeding. The company also warned that anyone who failed to stop at the crossing would be written up under its health and safety policy.

All log truck drivers should be aware that operators of trains have little or no chance of reacting in time to avoid a collision at a level crossing. Freight trains can reach speeds of 105 kilometres per hour and an 88-car train travelling at that speed can take longer than one minute to come to a complete stop. It's therefore up to operators of road vehicles to prevent collisions at railway crossings.

To create a more obvious way of alerting drivers to the hazard of private railways crossings, a Northwestern Ontario company has developed a portable battery-operated roadside warning system that consists of a continuously flashing red traffic light mounted above a regulation-size stop sign. Firms wishing more information about this system can contact WWS Manufacturing at (807) 879-1173.

OFSWA Ontario Forestry Safe
Workplace Association

ASTIFO Association pour la sécurité au travail
dans l'industrie forestière de l'Ontario

Although the description of circumstances arises from an actual situation, this Industry Alert does not reflect the final analysis of the situation, nor is it meant to assign blame on the part of any person or member firm. For further information, contact OFSWA at (705) 474-7233.

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