



(September 20) Every day, Sheriff's deputies write dozens of citations for pedestrian and vehicle violations at grade crossings of Metro Blue Line and Union Pacific tracks – on some busy days, one every 15 minutes.

Sunday, Sept. 19, was no exception. During the annual "California Operation Lifesaver" railway safety event, deputies wrote 15 citations for violations involving moving violations, stopping on the tracks and failing to obey signals, according to Sheriff's Lt. Dave Telez.

Speaking at a pre-event news conference, California Operation Lifesaver president Eric Jacobsen, said California leads the nation in railroad trespasser fatalities, with more than 300 deaths between 1995 and 1998. Another 100 died in highway rail-crossing collisions with trains.

"More trains are operating today in California," Jacobsen said. "This is a growing state and people are using the rights of way for recreation with off-road vehicles, biking and jogging. People don't know it's illegal to trespass on railroad property."

Sheriff's Capt. Marc Klugman, head of the Transit Services Bureaus for both the MTA and Metrolink, said police groups across the U.S. are "aggressively enforcing trespassing laws on rail property to prevent accidents, injuries and deaths. In Los Angeles, we work with the MTA and SCRRA to emphasize enforcement, education and engineering."

California Operation Lifesaver, a non-profit safety coalition of freight, passenger and commuter railroads, law enforcement and government officials, also held events in Riverside, City of Industry, Lancaster and San Diego. The organization is sponsoring a TV public service campaign called "Highways or Dieways" to educate the public about safe behavior around railroad tracks.

Want to join the 2,500 Operation Lifesaver volunteers? For

information, call 1-800-537-6224. Or Eric Jacobsen at 530-367-3918 or [caol@foothill.net](mailto:caol@foothill.net).

- **Safety Tips and Track Facts**

### **Safety Tips from 'Operation Lifesaver'**

**Never** drive around lowered crossing gates - it's illegal and deadly.

**Never** race a train to a crossing - even if you tie, you lose.

**Don't** get trapped on a crossing.

**If** your vehicle stalls, get out and call for help.

**Expect** a train on the tracks at any time.

**Watch** for a second train when crossing multiple tracks.

**Don't** misjudge a train's speed and distance.

**Be** aware trains can't stop quickly.

### **Track Facts**

- Approximately every 115 minutes in the U.S. a train hits a vehicle or pedestrian.
- California has 12,774 highway-rail grade crossings.
- A motorist is 40 times more likely to die in a collision with a train than in a collision with another motor vehicle.
- Over half of crashes at public grade crossings occur where active warning devices are installed.
- An average freight train with 100 cars moving at 55 mph takes a mile or more to stop.

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