

TRAIN DANGERS & RAILROAD HAZARDS – PART I

Trains have been around for more than 150 years and they continue to play a vital role in our economy. They transport goods over long distances far more cheaply than do planes or trucks. However, all those trains mean that there are frequent accidents and, because trains are so large, these accidents can cause serious injuries. Thousands of people are injured by trains in the United States every year. Such an injury may give rise to a claim against a railroad.

BE CAREFUL!

Of course, the best way to deal with train collisions is to prevent them in the first place. Drivers and pedestrians need to remember that trains are large and heavy, and they take a long time to stop. Trains are confined to their tracks and if you are on the tracks, the train will hit you. Drivers who are crossing a railroad track should carefully check for trains before crossing the tracks, even if the crossing is equipped with warning devices such as lights and gates.

FACTS ABOUT RAILROAD ACCIDENTS

- The federal government says that 80% of all railroad crossings have inadequate warning devices.
- A train traveling at 55 mph takes nearly one mile to stop after the emergency brakes are applied.

Drivers must be especially careful at crossings where there is more than one set of tracks, because a train on the first set of tracks may obscure the view of a train on the second set of tracks. Never cross the tracks unless there is room for your car to drive completely off of the tracks on the other side. If a train is anywhere in sight, wait for it to pass. Needless to say, ***do not drive around lowered crossing gates***. It is far better to be a few minutes late than severely injured, or dead.

Pedestrians also need to exercise caution and should follow the same rules as drivers. Pedestrians should cross train tracks only at marked crossings, and they should not walk across or fish from a train trestle because they may be trapped if a train arrives unexpectedly. Train

tracks should never be used as paths or walkways. In fact, pedestrians should be very careful even when walking beside railroad tracks because trains hang over the edge of the tracks by at least three feet on each side—cargo may extend this distance even further.

Watch for Part II of *Train Dangers & Railroad Hazards* in next month's edition.

Nothing in this article should be construed as legal advice. You must consult with an attorney for the application of the law to your specific circumstances.

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