



Florida Department of Transportation

RON DESANTIS
GOVERNOR

605 Suwannee Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0450

JARED W. PERDUE, P.E.
SECRETARY

For Immediate Release
September 23, 2024

Contact: FDOT Communications Office
(850) 414-4590 | FDOTCommunicationsOffice@dot.state.fl.us

FDOT Recognizes Rail Safety Week and Highlights Florida's Newly-Established, First-in-the-Nation Rail Safety Coalition

TALLAHASSEE, FL. – This week, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is proud to join transportation partners throughout the state and country to recognize *Rail Safety Week* and call attention to the ways we can collectively prevent tragedies around trains and railroad tracks.

Florida's rail network is comprised of both freight and passenger rail lines, and with an aggressive goal to ultimately eliminate serious injuries and fatalities from occurring throughout Florida's rail network, FDOT recently became the first agency in the nation to create a coalition solely focused on addressing rail-related concerns. **The Florida Rail Safety Coalition (FRSC)** brings together rail industry partners to develop strategic solutions in infrastructure enhancements, innovative technology, and behavioral science research to reduce the likelihood of rail collisions and related fatalities and serious injuries across the state.

Each year, communities across the nation experience the heartbreaking loss of their loved ones, friends, and neighbors in rail collisions. Preliminary data shows that 49 people in Florida lost their lives in rail-related incidents in 2023, all attributed to either trespassing or crossing collisions, and nearly 80 others were injured. These statistics and their contributing factors emphasize that these incidents are **preventable** by practicing responsible rail-safety behaviors.

“For decades, Florida has served as a national leader in the implementation of innovative rail safety initiatives, and the establishment of the FRSC is yet another example of how we’re leading the way towards a safer transportation future,” said **Florida Department of Transportation Secretary Jared W. Perdue, P.E.** “As the Coalition works together to deliver solutions focused on preventing tragedies on our rail network, we urge all Floridians to play their part by understanding the life-changing consequences of unsafe behaviors around trains and tracks. Together, we can get everyone home safely.”

The FRSC is currently comprised of subject matter experts, FDOT team members from the Department’s Central Office Safety, Design, Transit, and Freight and Rail Offices and representatives from each of FDOT’s Districts across the state, freight rail organizations (Class I, II, and Shortline,) passenger rail organizations, and rail advocacy groups who all share a passion for rail safety. The Coalition will also expand to include representatives from law enforcement, state rail inspectors, universities and local communities in the future. The FRSC members are working to develop rail-safety solutions rooted in four main focus areas: at-grade crossing safety, trespassing prevention, standards and technology, and partnerships. These diverse focus areas underscore the unique challenge of addressing rail safety in Florida’s communities and how these achievements rely on collaboration across all industries.

In addition to the creation of the Florida Rail Safety Coalition, FDOT has continued taking action towards enhancing the safety of rail crossings on the state highway system with investments totaling over \$178 million over the last decade. These investments have resulted in real, tangible change for the safety of local communities, as well as the efficient movement of our freight network and supply chain, and have included the installation of important countermeasures on state facilities such as increased signage and pavement markings, smart sensors and detection technology, anti-trespass panels, and Dynamic Envelopes. Through FDOT’s Railway-Highway Crossings (Section 130) Program, countermeasures installed at 818 project locations around the state have reduced collisions between trains and vehicles or pedestrians by nearly 50 percent, fatal incidents by nearly 70 percent, and serious injury incidents by nearly 55 percent over the last decade. The reduction in these collisions has also played an important role in ensuring the efficient movement of people and goods across the state’s rail network, as these collisions can cause disruptions in critical shipments of supplies throughout Florida and beyond state lines.

As Florida actively works to expand safety countermeasures throughout the state’s transportation system and educate communities on the dangers of partaking in unsafe behaviors around trains and tracks, it is important to call attention to the leading cause of all rail-related incidents nationwide: human behavior. With crossing collisions and pedestrian trespassing on tracks attributing to 94% percent of railroad fatalities in

Florida in 2023, all road users are encouraged to uphold their personal responsibility of following these rail safety practices while operating a vehicle, walking, or bicycling:

- Only cross at designated rail crossings and ensure the ability to clear the tracks completely and safely, including attached trailers
- Stop behind the Dynamic Envelope markings each time you're at a crossing. If you're stopped within these markings, your vehicle isn't fully cleared from the tracks and has the potential to be struck by a passing train.
- Never stop a vehicle on tracks or attempt to drive around lowered gates
- Do Not Trespass: Never go on or near tracks, including driving, walking along, or taking photos
- Stay Alert: Refrain from using headphones, cell phones, or distractions in the vicinity of tracks
- Don't Risk It: Trains can't easily stop for you. The average freight train weighs over 400,000 pounds, and when traveling at 55 mph, it can take over a mile – or the length of 18 football fields – to come to a complete stop.
- Always expect a train. Trains are much faster than they appear and may come from any direction.
- Never assume that there is only one train coming from a single direction, as a second train may be close behind. Multiple tracks may mean multiple trains.

Learn more about the Florida Rail Safety Coalition here:

<https://www.fdot.gov/rail/programs/florida-rail-safety-coalition>

FDOT's mission is to provide a safe statewide transportation system that promotes the efficient movement of people and goods, supports the state's economic competitiveness, prioritizes Florida's environment and natural resources, and preserves the quality of life and connectedness of the state's communities.

###

www.fdot.gov | X: [@MyFDOT](https://twitter.com/MyFDOT) | Facebook: [@MyFDOT](https://www.facebook.com/MyFDOT)

The mission of the Florida Department of Transportation is to provide a safe statewide transportation system that promotes the efficient movement of people and goods, supports the state's economic competitiveness, prioritizes Florida's environment and natural resources, and preserves the quality of life and connectedness of the state's communities.