SAFETY AT LEVEL CROSSINGS

Údarás Um Shábháilteacht Ar Bhóithre
Road Safety Authority
At railway crossings, careless use costs lives!

Always approach railway level crossings with care. Slow down and prepare to stop. Obey signs and road markings.

Never stop on the railway tracks.

At Unattended level crossings – be wary!
- Stop, look, listen and give way to trains.
- Open all gates before driving across.
- Shut and fasten the gates after you – it’s the law and you could save a life!

From the Road Safety Authority and Iarnród Éireann Irish Rail. Visit rsa.ie for more information.
Railway level crossings

Introduction

A railway level crossing is an intersection where a road or passage crosses a railway track.

Drivers and other users should be aware of the different types of crossing and should know how to cross safely. You must always approach a level crossing with care.

This booklet outlines the different types of level crossings and the correct and safe way to use them.

As you approach any railway level crossing you must obey the signs and roadway markings, slow down and be prepared to stop.

You must not enter a yellow box area unless you can clear it without stopping. You must never stop on the railway tracks.

At unattended level crossings:

Use the Rail Cross Code each time you cross:

- Always expect a train
- Stop, Look and Listen
  - Stop – two metres back clear of the railway line
  - Look – right and left, watching for the lights of approaching trains
  - Listen – for a train horn or whistle
- Give Way to Trains
  - Let any approaching train pass, then look right and left again
- When the Railway is clear, cross quickly

REMEMBER

Never stop a vehicle on the railway tracks.
Emergency actions at level crossings

If your vehicle stalls or an animal strays on the railway:

- move everyone well clear of the railway
- leave the animal or vehicle where it is
- tell the railway controller, using the phone number displayed at the crossing
- state the ‘crossing number’ shown at the crossing

Unusual movements across level crossings

Drivers of very high vehicles should note that at level crossings with overhead electrified lines, such as on the DART network, the safe head-room is 5 metres (16ft 4ins).

You should contact the railway in advance, using the phone number displayed at the level crossing, when arranging special events such as matches, funerals or processions that will involve the use of the level crossing.

In addition, at level crossings with iron gates or automatic half-barriers, or on minor roads where protection is by traffic lights only, you should contact the railway, using the phone number displayed at the level crossing, to seek permission before crossing with:

- awkward vehicles – for example, long, low, wide, heavy or slow, vehicles
- vehicles carrying dangerous goods or exceptional loads
- crowds of people or herds of animals
General instructions for the safe use of different types of level crossing

1. Unattended railway level crossings with iron gates

These unattended level crossings are found on minor roads. The railway is normally guarded by iron gates which must be kept shut – there is no other protection. The user has the responsibility to open and shut the gates.

These crossings can be dangerous to use and drivers should use all available help to cross safely. It is preferable for drivers to use a bridge or an attended or automated level crossing where one is available.

Drivers – what you should do

Prepare

- STOP clear of the gates
- Switch off phone and music systems
- Open windows on driver and passenger sides
- Read instructions at the crossing
- Get a helper to operate the gates if possible

Use the **Rail Cross Code** each time you cross:

- **Always expect a train**
- **Stop, Look and Listen**
  - **Stop** – two metres back clear of the railway line
  - **Look** – right and left, watching for the lights of approaching trains
  - **Listen** – for a train horn or whistle
- **Give Way to Trains**
  Let any approaching train pass, then **look** right and left again
- **When the Railway is clear, cross quickly**

**Drive across safely**
- First walk across and open both gates
- Drive forward and STOP two metres clear of the railway line
- Apply your handbrake
- Look right and left and listen
- Drive across quickly when the railway is clear
- Stop well clear of the tracks on the opposite side
Drivers – what you **must** do

**Shut gates at unattended level crossings**

- You must shut and fasten the gates as soon as you and any person, animal or vehicle under your care has passed through.
- Even if the gates are open when you arrive, you must shut and fasten them after you to protect others.
- Failure to shut and fasten the gates is an offence.

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**REMEMBER**

Stay Alert...

STOP, LOOK and LISTEN

Give way to trains

Always shut and fasten the iron gates

Failure to do so is an offence.
2. **Attended railway level crossings with gates or barriers operated by railway staff**

These level crossings are manually operated by railway staff. The level crossing is only open to the public when the gates are fully open to the road.

**Drivers – what you must do**

- Slow down approaching the crossing

- Be prepared to stop if necessary
3. **Automated railway level crossings protected by road traffic lights only**

These level crossings have no barriers or gates. Users must obey the road traffic lights at these open level crossings.

![Image of a level crossing with a warning sign](image)

**Level crossing ahead, unguarded by gates or lifting barrier**

**Drivers – what you must do**

- Obey the rules for traffic lights
- If you have already entered the crossing move clear as quickly as possible
4. **Automated railway level crossings with barriers and flashing red lights**

These level crossings have barriers which automatically descend when a train is approaching. The amber light is the same as an amber traffic light – stop safely when the amber light shows. Flashing red lights have the same meaning as a steady red traffic light – stop safely when they show.

**Drivers – what you **must** do**

- Obey the rules for traffic lights
- If you have already entered the crossing move clear as quickly as possible
- Wait for all lights to extinguish and barriers to be raised before moving on

**REMEMBER**

A flashing red light always means stop
You should never zigzag around the barriers of a level crossing
Pedestrians crossing the railway

Pedestrians – what you should do

Prepare

- Switch off phones and music systems
- Read any instructions at the crossing
- Contact the railway in advance, using the phone number displayed at the level crossing:
  - when arranging special events such as matches, funerals or processions that will involve the use of the level crossing
  - to seek permission before crossing the railway with crowds of people or herds of animals at a level crossing with iron gates or automatic half-barriers, or on minor roads where protection is by traffic lights only
- Take extra care with a wheelchair, pram or buggy
Beware

- Never trespass onto a railway line
- Always expect a train
- Supervise children near the railway
- Keep dogs on a lead
- Only cross at a designated level crossing
- Obey traffic lights, where provided
- If crossing with a pram, wheelchair or bicycle, you should cross the tracks carefully to avoid getting the wheels caught in the groove

Use the **Rail Cross Code** each time you cross:

- **Always expect a train**
- **Stop, Look and Listen**
  - **Stop** – two metres back clear of the railway line
  - **Look** – right and left, watching for the lights of approaching trains
  - **Listen** – for a train horn or whistle
- **Give Way to Trains**
  - Let any approaching train pass, then **look** right and left again
- **When the Railway is clear, cross quickly**

**REMEMBER**

STOP, LOOK and LISTEN

Give way to trains

Never trespass onto the railway
Pedestrians – what you must do

Shut gates at unattended level crossings

- You must shut and fasten the gates as soon as you and any person, animal or vehicle under your care has passed through
- Even if the gates are open when you arrive, you must shut and fasten them after you to protect others
- Failure to shut and fasten the gates is an offence

**REMEMBER**

Always shut and fasten the iron gates

Failure to do so is an offence.

Emergency actions at level crossings

If an animal strays onto the railway, or if a pram, wheelchair or bicycle gets stuck on the tracks:

- move everyone well clear of the railway
- leave the animal or vehicle where it is
- tell the railway controller, using the phone number displayed at the crossing
- state the ‘crossing number’ shown at the crossing

*Example ‘Crossing number’ plate displayed at a level crossing*
Cyclists and horse riders crossing the railway

- As you approach a level crossing, you **must** obey the signs, slow down and be prepared to stop.
- You **must** obey the Rules of the Road.
- Follow the relevant instructions and emergency actions applying to pedestrians at railway level crossings.
- Cyclists – cross at right angles to the tracks or else dismount to avoid getting the wheels caught in the groove.
- Cyclists and horse riders – dismount and walk across the railway line at iron-gated level crossings and at passages.