

4th edition of the International Level Crossing Awareness Day (ILCAD)

International launch conference on 7 June 2012 at RFF Headquarters in Paris

On the occasion of the 4th edition of ILCAD, RFF hosted the international launch conference of ILCAD 2012 on 7 June.

Representatives from 42 countries around the world, their partners, institutions and the media had the opportunity, either physically or through internet (open to the public) to follow the ILCAD 2012 international conference.

7 eminent French and international speakers, specialists in human factors and behaviour, time perception, level crossing safety, education and road safety were invited to talk and exchange on safety issues at level crossings, the debate was moderated by Ann Swardson (Bloomberg, Washington Post Paris).

The International Level Crossing Awareness Day campaign 2012 was officially open by **Hubert du Mesnil, RFF Chairman:**

“RFF is very proud to welcome the official launch of ILCAD 2012, organised by UIC, and most happy to see that a French initiative in 2008 has become first European and then worldwide. In France, our commitment has enabled fatalities at level crossings to be halved in the last 10 years. We have to continue our efforts towards better road safety.”

Jean-Pierre Loubinoux, International Union of Railways (UIC) Director-General added:

“Since 2010, the first truly International Level Crossing Awareness Day, more than 42 countries around the world are involved including four new partners: (Morocco, Turkey, Spain and Norway). On 7 June 2012 under the single logo “ILCAD” and a single motto: “Act safely at level crossings”, they organise their campaign either only on 7 June, or during one week or one month like RFF. We are targeting even more partners, thus enabling the campaign to reach an even wider audience of potential level crossing users.”

The first part of the debate was dedicated to an overview of the situation in France, in Europe with last consolidated figures from ERA and concrete examples of education campaigns in Estonia, Poland, Great Britain, and more globally from the U.S.A. and Australia.

The second part of the debate concentrated more on human factors AND behaviours (main causes of accidents, impatience, time perception in our today’s society.

Marcel Verslype, European Railway Agency (ERA) Executive Director started with an overview of figures on level crossing safety in Europe.

“There are about 123 000 level crossings in Europe. In recent years, on average of one person has been killed and close to one seriously injured at level crossings in Europe every day. In 2010, the latest year for which harmonized data on level crossing safety in Europe are available, 619 significant level crossing accidents occurred in the EU resulting in 359 fatalities and 327 serious injuries. The progress in reducing level crossing deaths has been slow compared to the progress achieved on EU roads. The economic impact of these casualties is estimated at EUR 350 millions. Level crossing accidents represent 27% of all significant railway accidents and 28% of all fatalities on railway, suicides excluded.” M. Verslype said.

Alan Davies, Community Safety Programme Manager, National Programmes at RSSB (U.K.) and ELCF Chairman gave examples of misuses at level crossings, and their causes and mentioned examples of education campaigns aiming at changing people’s behaviours when using level crossings:

“Just over 1% of the total number of people killed on the roads of Europe, die at level crossings. Initiatives like the European Road Safety Charter have been successful in almost halving the number of fatalities on the roads. But the number of killed people crossing railway lines has not fallen by the same amount.

Most of the people killed at crossings die because of incorrect use. This is why the International Level Crossing Awareness Day is so important, so that people learn how to “Act Safely at Level Crossings”.

Misbehaviour arises either through error, because people are unaware of the correct way to cross the railway, or by deliberate violation, when they choose to cross against the protection at a crossing.

Changing attitudes comes by education, through events like ILCAD and other excellent campaigns like the Chris Cairns Foundation in New Zealand and Operation Lifesaver.” A. Davies said

Martin Gallagher, Head of Level Crossings at Network Rail presented the situation in Great Britain as far as Investing, Research, Engineering, Education and Enforcement are concerned:

"Reducing the risk of level crossings on the rail network is a priority for us. We are investing £130m in a wide ranging programme of activity from upgrading crossings with new technology or even closing them if we can, to employing dedicated level crossing managers and a national advertising campaign.

Showing users what to do - how to use a level crossing - is just as important of showing them the consequences of not doing so. This is why the ILCAD is so important. Of course, many road users are perfectly well aware of what they are doing and choose to ignore warning signals and signs. This is why an enforcement strategy is also another piece of this jigsaw to reduce accidents.

In GB we have introduced mobile level crossing enforcement vehicles, manned by police officers but only deployed to level crossings. They are sophisticated, with a

high technical specification. We are also in the process of introducing fixed enforcement cameras nationally.” M. Gallagher said

Katarzyna Kucharek, Head of social communication section, Information and Promotion Office PKP Polskie Linie Kolejowe S.A. presented the Polish campaign. *“Last year Poland was proud to host ILCAD. Many activities were carried out during three days and started with an international press conference in Warsaw attended by the UIC General Assembly Members and that could be seen in streaming worldwide. On 8th June special events were organized in Warsaw (exhibition of drawings, photographs, blood donation, special railway police forces exercises...).. Last year PKP PLK organised 23 train-car collisions across Poland combined with rescue actions as well as press briefings. ILCAD events in Poland had a very large media coverage on a national level (46 Internet publications, press articles, 16 radio programs and 16 TV reports). In 2011 205 accidents were reported, 20% fewer than in 2010. It shows that somehow with the closure of some level crossings, education, awareness and information have contributed a lot to this accident reduction.*

On 24th May 2012 PKP PLK launched the national campaign “Safe rail-road level crossing – “Stop and live!” (7 June being a day off in Poland). PKP PLK organized again 22 crash simulations at level crossings with press briefings and rescue actions across the country. We supported again the 2nd UIC drawing contest with many contestants, and a high number of them have been awarded with prizes. We think all these actions contribute to aware people (children) better of the dangers at level crossings. Finally we also made an education video with children to show this film during education campaigns in schools.” K. Kucharek said.

Tamo Vahemets, Chairman of the Board, Operation Lifesaver Estonia

‘We are delighted to see that the idea of ILCAD attracts each year more and more countries and organisations. This indicates that we have chosen the right path, as good initiatives tend to grow. ILCAD is growing into something similar to a public railway charter where countries and organisations take voluntarily the obligation to talk about the issues related to railway crossings. I believe that ILCAD will continue to grow also in the forthcoming years and becomes eventually an international level crossing awareness day during which are discussed various public railway safety issues and people are called upon to cross railways safely.’

Helen Sramek, President of Operation Lifesaver (OL), Inc. gave an overview of the activities driven in the USA on the ILCAD day through a pre-recorded interview

“Operation Lifesaver USA is pleased to join its partner countries around the world for the 2012 observance of International Level Crossing Awareness Day. This year also marks the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Operation Lifesaver rail safety awareness program in the USA. While we have made great progress in reducing the number of crashes (-84% since our creation), deaths and injuries at crossings in the USA, safety at level crossings is important as ever. Activities will be taking place across the country in conjunction with ILCAD, including crossing blitzes (special education effort in areas with high numbers of incidents), special trains, positive enforcement exercises, safety presentations, press conferences, disseminating

safety messages through advertising and social media, and many other events.” H. Sramek said.

Michael Martino, Association of American Railroads (AAR) described the actions carried out by AAR jointly with OL inc. and railway companies during ILCAD: *“The Association of American Railroads is looking forward to participating, for the second year in a row, in the International Level Crossing Awareness Day 2012. The Class I freight railroads and Amtrak will be working with their Operation Lifesaver counterparts across the nation at various venues to bring promote awareness to the importance grade crossing safety. Events will include; Officer on the Train Events, Grade Crossing Collision Investigation Classes, Positive Enforcement, Operation Lifesaver Presentations, Crossing Closure/ grade crossing separation project, and Trespass abatement.”* M. Martino said.

Bryn Nye, Chief Executive Officer, Australasian Railway Association in a pre-recorded interview said:

“The Australasian Railway Association is a member of a new Australian rail industry initiative launched this year- the trackSAFE Foundation. trackSAFE has been launched to further increase the focus on level crossing safety in Australia. With participation by more than 40 countries from across the world last year, here in Australia once again we will be driving the message to ‘Act Safely at Level Crossings’ on International Level Crossing Awareness Day. We commend the organisers of the event for bringing international awareness to this vital rail safety issue. ”

Girolamo Ramunni, Research Director, CNAM in France gave his position on the perception and management of time. *“Time perception may be different according to the person, the age, the culture and the country. The perception of time passing at a level crossing is very different according to the person waiting (young person, active person, children or elder people). In addition in our modern today’s society people don’t know how to pass time! They have to keep busy! When people are busy they don’t see time running, but when they have to wait even 30” may be seen as an eternity for some people in our modern society where people are always doing something, connected to modern devices (mobile phones, MP3, GPS, etc... that are dangerous when driving)”*. G. Ramunni said.

Emmanuel Renard, Director, Education/Training Dept. at the French Association for Road Safety Prevention: *“Accidents at level crossings even if the number is not very high is also a road safety issue for our association. We study risky behaviors at level crossings and help the railways in their awareness campaign delivering awareness messages.”* He said.

The international conference was concluded by SPARKIE, the Estonian mascot that got out of his country for the first time to visit France. He made a call to all countries that may be interested in the future to participate in this wonderful international human adventure aiming at delivering safety messages at and around level crossings on a larger scale simply to save lives!

For further information please visit our website: www.ilcad.org that received 5 times more visits than last year!

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