Objectives: Participants will learn:

- Key safety facts.
- Identify and read signs at crossings.
- Describe trespassing and how to avoid trespassing.
- Identify and dispel common myths about track safety.
- What to do if there is an emergency near a train or train track.
- Where to find more information about Operation Lifesaver.

Materials Needed:

- PowerPoint Presentation, “Rail Safety Education”
- Yardstick/Walking Stick
- Fan/Sound Machine or another noise-making device (radio/Spotify on a phone can work)
- Light colored bandanna (for use as a blindfold)
- Optional Handouts: Signs (Handout 1 below)
- Optional Handout: Fact or Fantasy? (PDF Card Handout)
- Colorful sticky notes

Note for Instructors: Operation Lifesaver, Inc. is a national rail safety non-profit. Through education and outreach, Operation Lifesaver seeks to stop track tragedies. This lesson guide was designed with the help of 4H to fit with the 4H model of practical application and applied learning. Educators should adapt to fit the needs of their class or club.

Instructor Prep:

1. Review the information presented in “Rail Safety Education”
2. Review the difference between active and passive railroad crossings, especially if you live in an area that has both.
3. For additional information and/or resources, visit: https://oli.org/info/kids

Introduction Activity: Fact or Fantasy?

1. Print out the Fact or Fantasy Handout.
2. Spread each Fact or Fantasy card out around the playing area, attaching to a wall or sturdy object.
3. Divide group up into teams or partners.
4. Give each group 5 sticky notes of each color.
5. Designate a color of sticky note to be fact and one to be fantasy.
6. Tell participants that you are going to give them a statement. They will have 10 seconds to decide with their group if the statement is a Fact, or a Fantasy.
7. Someone from their group must move quickly with their group sticky to the statement and mark their choice for **fact or fantasy**.

The statements:

1. Trains can run on any track in any direction (**Fact**)
2. Every three hours in the US, a person or vehicle is hit by a train (**Fact**)
3. If no train is coming, you can cross a track anywhere (**Fantasy**)
4. Every railroad crossing always has a sidewalk (**Fantasy**)
5. Trains cannot stop quickly (**Fact**)

Ask participants if they were surprised by any of these answers.

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**Presentation Activity**

**Share** the slides presented as **“Rail Safety Education”**

- **Slides** include notes on the bottom of each individual slide to help engage with participants and/or spark conversation. Incorporate current club-specific activities and club focus.

- **Notes** include guidance for incorporating the following supplemental activities.

**Use the following activities as needed** to augment and support the presentation of material.

- **Activity #1 How does a Train Move (Slide 2-5)**

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**Set up two points about 5 feet apart from one another.**

1. Ask a participant to demonstrate what they think is the **FASTEST** way from one point to another.
2. Ask a second participant to demonstrate if there is a faster or more efficient way. Encourage them to move their body in a different way (rolling or running).
3. Ask the group: **What is the most efficient?** It’s moving quickly, but effectively as in a straight line between A and B.
4. Next, put an object (such as a penny or a pencil) in the middle of points A and B.
5. Ask a new participant to demonstrate the most efficient point (a common idea will be to go over the midpoint object).
   a. Explain to participants that a train cannot go OVER an object—try another option.
   b. Most participants will then go around an object. Explain that trains cannot go around, and they can only run on their tracks. Try another option.
   c. **If time allows**, you can add more points, or further distance, but the core questions should still be:
      i. What is the fastest way you can get from one to another?
      ii. What is the most efficient way?
6. Guide participants to explore what are some of the effects of not being able to go around their object, or over it.
Activity #2: Staying Focused Near Train and Tracks (Slides)

Set up by clearing a playing space for participants to move around in. This activity is designed to help participants understand external focus factors such as sound and how visual factors can inhibit focus.

1. Tell participants they will be told to sit, lie, or stand in quick succession.
2. They will need to hear the direction and instantly do as they are told in the direction.
3. Turn on an age-appropriate popular song (any genre, whatever the participants are listening to).
4. Begin by calling out one of the three directives: sit, lie, or stand.
5. Encourage participants to sing, dance, or move while listening to between each direction, further providing distractions between participants.
6. Get progressively quicker between calls but try to control the volume. Alternately, make the music progressively louder.
7. See if participants struggle to hear and/or to respond to the directives as given because of changes in their concentration and factors that inhibit focus.

After a few rounds, discuss with the participants how the distractions impacted their ability to follow their instructions.

To make it harder, you can divide the group in half (or thirds depending on the size of your playing space) and blindfold your participants, focusing their attention on what they are hearing.

Explain to participants that trains and tracks are important parts of communities. Explain that Trains are an essential part of the National supply chain. Have them brainstorm what freight the hauls and the benefits of using the rail to ship products. Because trains and the tracks they run on are important to communities, whenever you see tracks, think train!

Activity #3 Know the Signs

Explain to participants that different states have different regulations about what must be included at each private crossing (to learn more about the regulations in your state, visit www.fra.gov). There are a few signs that they should know: a stop sign, crossbuck sign, and ENS sign (emergency notification system).

This activity requires roll play and creative development. Have participants use creative elements to write or describe their work.

1. Break participants up into 4 Groups or a series of partners.
2. Give each group 1 sign (ENS, Stop, Crossbuck, and Yield—if fewer groups, use the ENS, Crossbuck, and Yield). Use the attached handouts.
3. Instruct participants that they will be presenting a situation that must reference their sign, complete at least one action that their sign directs them to take, and include at least two group participants interacting. Encourage participants to be as creative as they want!
   a. To the group with the ENS sign: have the participants think of a scenario where they would need to use the ENS sign. This can be a report of livestock on the track, or a vehicle stuck on track, etc.) NOTE: they should include calling the sign to use (be sure to encourage students to work through calling and giving the information they would need to give in an emergency).
b. To the group with the STOP sign: have participants think of a scenario where they would follow a STOP directive. This can be because their load is not secure, or they cannot see around current growth along the track. NOTE: IF YOU SEE A STOP SIGN, YOU MUST COME TO A FULL AND COMPLETE STOP

c. To the group with the YIELD sign: this reminds motorists that the train has the right-of-way, but they are not legally required to come to a full and complete stop. Present a scenario with what you would need to do and know when you see this. NOTE: THIS IS COMMON AT PRIVATE CROSSINGS. With this group, you can assist them in working through a role-playing scenario where they would minimize distraction in the slowing near the yield sign.

d. To the Group with a CROSSBUCK Sign: have participants improv a scenario where they would use this information to guide their operating of the equipment. NOTE: THIS SIGN IS PRESENT AT ALL CROSSINGS AND INDICATES THAT A TRACK IS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING. (Can be an example of minimizing distractions as well as knowing to check for an oncoming train in either direction).

4. Give participants 10 minutes to think through their scenario. Remind them that they must reference seeing their sign and letting that knowledge impact their decision-making in whatever scenario they have created.

5. Each group presents to the class. After presentations, ask participants to consider: did the group follow key instructions when that sign was seen?

Closing:

Remind participants that stopping track tragedies starts with taking a few extra seconds to understand their surroundings. To stay safe near tracks, participants should consider:

To stay safe near railroad tracks and trains, participants should:

- Know the Signs: Understanding warning signs, signals, and devices and what each one means.
- Keep distractions to a minimum:
  - Increase ways to hear
  - Increase visibility when possible
  - Be aware of their surroundings
  - Know what to do in an emergency, including how to use the ENS Make safe choices around railroad tracks and trains. Understand what to do when you need to cross.

Share the farm PSA (embedded on the last slide)
Figure 3 Crossbuck

Figure 4 Emergency Notification System (ENS) Sign