Objectives: Participants will learn:

- Key Safety Facts.
- Reminders for operating farm machinery safely near tracks.
- Identify and read signs and warning devices near tracks.
- Safe practices for driving near tracks.
- What to do if there is an emergency near a train or train track.
- Where to find more information from Operation Lifesaver

Materials Needed:

- PowerPoint Presentation, “Trains, Tracks, and Tractors.”
- Index Cards (Lined/unlined)
- Yardstick/walking stick
- Optional: Sign Handout (Handout 1)
- Optional: Distraction Chart Handout (Handout 2)

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 can adapt the activities as needed.

Instructor Prep:

1. Review the information presented in “Trains, Tracks, and Tractors.”
2. Review the differences between active and passive railroad crossings, especially if you are in an area that has both.
3. Optional: Print any handouts that will be used.
4. For additional information and/or resources, visit New Drivers | Operation Lifesaver (oli.org)

Introduction: True/False Misconceptions

Distribute two index cards to each participant (if this is a large group, feel free to split the group into teams and distribute cards in team set).

1. On one card, write the word TRUE.
2. On the other, write the word FALSE.
3. Read the following statements. After reading each one, have participants decide whether the statement was TRUE or FALSE.
   a. If you see a train approaching, then the train is traveling closer and faster than it appears.
i. TRUE  

b. Trains can run on any track, at any time, and in any direction.  
i. TRUE  

c. It’s never safe to drive around a lowered crossing gate.  
i. TRUE  

d. An average-sized freight train striking your car is like your car crushing a full soda can.  
i. TRUE  

e. Every three hours in the US, a person or vehicle is hit by a train.  
i. TRUE  

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

Presentation of Lesson and Learning Objectives

- Share the Slides presented Trains, Tracks, and Tractors.  
  - Slides include notes on EACH slide to help engage with participants, and/or spark conversation.  
  - Notes include areas to incorporate additional activities.  

- During this activity, stop as needed to discuss particulars related to safe driving practices.  
  - Include information reminding participants how to operate their equipment (how to raise a hitch)  
  - Use specific stopping locations/addresses within your community.  
  - Discuss the types of crossings your participants have seen.  

Additional Activities:  

Use as needed. Suggested for use with specific slides (indicated in bold). Incorporate other information/activities as needed or desired.

Activity #1 How does a train MOVE? (Suggested with Slide 3)

Set up two points about 15 feet from each other.

1. Ask a participant to share what they think is the most EFFICIENT way to move from one point to another.  
2. Ask for a second participant to try to think of a MORE efficient way (perhaps it is running or rolling on the floor).  
3. Ask the group: Describe the most efficient path (often a straight line). Train tracks are built in the most efficient path.  
4. Next, put an object (penny/pencil) in the MIDDLE of Points A and B.  
5. Ask a participant to move in the most efficient way, avoiding the middle point. (Most participants will simply go over the mid-point).  
   a. Explain to participants that a train will not be able to go OVER an object, try another option  
   b. Most participants will then go around an object. Explain to participants that trains do not have steering wheels.  
   c. The only way that an object will interact with another object on the track is by running into it.
6. Remind students **who operate machinery** that they have a hand in keeping themselves and their equipment safe while working near trains and train tracks.

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**Activity #2 Know the Signs (Suggested Slide 8-11)**

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](http://www.fra.gov)). There are a few different signs you will encounter at a private or farm crossing: **stop sign, yield sign, crossbuck sign, and ENS sign** (emergency notification system).

Note that a private/farm crossing is **considered a passive crossing**; meaning some signs will be present, but no lights or gates.

This activity requires **role 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). Use the attached handouts.
3. Instruct participants that they will be presenting a situation that must include referencing their sign, at least one action that their sign would direct them to take, and at least two characters interacting (can be a phone situation, not everyone will be in the scene.) 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! Have them explain the information on the ENS sign as they place their call—they should walk through the steps of calling.
   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: Present a scenario with what you would need to do and know when you see this. 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. NOTE: THIS IS COMMON AT PRIVATE CROSSINGS.
   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. (Can be an example of minimizing distractions) NOTE: THIS SIGN IS SEEN AT EVERY CROSSING AND WILL DENOTE A TRAIN TRACK.
4. Give participants 10 minutes to think through their scenario and rehearse.
5. Each group presents to the class. After presentations, ask participants to consider:
   a. What is the **meaning** of each sign?
   b. What should you consider about your vehicle when you see each sign?

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**Activity #3 Minimizing Distractions (Slide 12)**

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[www.oli.org](http://www.oli.org)
1. Handout a copy of the distraction chart to each participant.

2. Remind participants about the differences between internal and external distractions.
   a. Internal are those distractions that exist inside, reactions to thoughts and emotions.
   b. External are those that have an outside focus that they can work to minimize.

3. Remind participants that they can learn to control distractions.

4. Go through the chart taking time to brainstorm a list of distractions and the type of distraction. Take a minute to discuss these distractions.

5. Brainstorm different ways that participants can control common distractions, sharing these ideas with each other.

Closing:

Remind participants that stopping track tragedies starts with taking a few extra seconds to understand their surroundings.

To Review, Consider: (reference Slide 14 with pictures of farm equipment)

- Keeping distractions minimal
  - Increasing ways to hear train and other traffic noises
  - Increasing visibility along tracks and at crossings
  - Being aware of an internal distraction
- Being aware of the size of their equipment and how to raise/lower equipment
- Understanding the steps to crossing safely
- Tactics for securing a load
  - Can be in conjunction with reviewing any other information about how to secure (knots/raising lowering your machinery etc.)

Share the Farm PSA Embedded on Slide 15.
HANDOUT 1: Signs (cut and use with Activity #2)

Figure 1 Crossbuck

Figure 2 Stop Sign