



**OPERATION
LIFESAVER®**

MAINE

Annual Report

2005

www.maineol.org

*Saving Lives at
America's Highway-Rail
Crossing, and along
Railroad Rights of Way.*

From the State Coordinator

Fred Hirsch

Good News! Bad News?

The good news is more rail lines are being reactivated and there is more rail traffic in Maine. The bad news is... Well, there isn't any bad news – yet, and we hope to keep it that way.

In early 2005, an eight-mile stretch of rail line between Easton and Fort Fairfield was seeing trains



again after many years of dormancy. Later in the year, rehabilitation work began to restore service on two branches – between Brunswick and Lisbon Falls, and from Madison to North Anson.

None of these lines had or have seen trains in a generation. That means kids have grown up never seeing a train pass through their back-

yards; snowmobilers and ATV riders never giving a thought to a train on the "trail" they've been using for years; drivers never considering a train at those once paved-over crossings.

This is where Maine Operation Lifesaver hopes to make a difference.

In Fort Fairfield, we called schools and the school transportation department, the fire, ambulance, and police departments, and public works and utility departments among others and arranged for presentations. In 2005, we embarked on similar campaigns in Topsham, Lisbon, Lisbon Falls, Madison, Anson, and North Anson. We've made presentations to hundreds of school children and the effort continues in 2006, setting up programs with snowmobile clubs, law enforcement, emergency responders, school bus drivers, and public works drivers. We work with the media, too, in hopes of getting out our safety message.

Looking back to a similar effort, volunteers with Maine Operation Lifesaver, I believe, can be most proud of what we've seen (or should it be said what we *haven't* seen) along 78 miles of rail between Portland and South Berwick over the past four years. Since Amtrak service began in December 2001, doubling the number of trains on that route and now with speeds up to 79 miles per hour, there has not been a single crash nor a single trespasser injured on the main line. Prior to Amtrak's start-up, thousands of children and professional drivers heard from O/L volunteers during presentations. We think that's been an important factor.

Whether it's been a concerted effort focused on a particular stretch of rail line or answering a request from a school teacher, service club secretary, driver ed instructor, or trucking company safety director, volunteers have answered the call – and we'll continue.

Train Trip Promotes Awareness

The sunny autumn day was perfect for a train excursion, but law enforcement officers and the media were aboard for more than a relaxing ride. This was Maine Operation Lifesaver's continuing effort to bring awareness of the dangers inherent along the rails when drivers are not cautious at crossings and the public ventures



O/L volunteer Jon Shute speaks to law enforcement during awareness trip.

onto the railroad's private property. Hosted by the Maine Eastern Railroad and operating between Wiscasset and Rockland, guests were briefed by railroad and Federal Railroad Administration officials. Many took turns riding in the locomotive, getting a chance to view a train from a new perspective and better understanding how difficult it is to avoid an incident once a driver or trespasser puts himself or herself in harm's way.

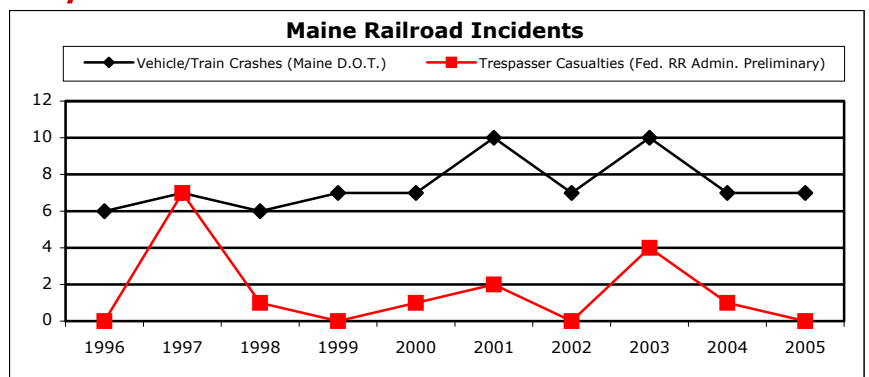
Bus Drivers Reminded of Safely Crossing Tracks

What should a school bus driver do if he or she cannot see far enough down the tracks to comfortably cross with a busload of children? What action does a bus driver take if the crossing lights are flashing, but no train comes?

Maine Operation Lifesaver certified presenters met face-to-face with more than 1,200 drivers in 2005 during a series of Maine Association of Pupil Transportation sponsored conferences. At sites from Berwick to Caribou, and even in Washington County where some drivers cross tracks only when taking teams or clubs to special events once or twice a year, 45 minutes were devoted to making sure their precious cargo stays safe. Assisting during the presentations was a newly-released video, "Decide Smart, Arrive Safe." School departments whose drivers did not attend the conferences can request a free presentation and/or a video and school bus safety literature.



By the Numbers....



Law Enforcement Trained to Investigate Rail Incidents

With rail traffic increasing in Maine, so increases the unfortunate chance of a vehicle or trespasser incident with a train. Maine Operation Lifesaver again in 2005 sponsored two Grade Crossing Collision Investigation courses. These two-day, 16-hour programs are approved by the Maine Criminal Justice



O/L volunteer Don McKay explains workings of a crossing signal.

Academy and count towards an officer's required annual training. Most instructors are also Maine O/L volunteers. Because a train-vehicle or train-trespasser incident is so different from the more typical calls deputies, troopers, and officers are summoned to, they are briefed on a wide variety of issues from state and federal law to keeping themselves out of harm's

way during an investigation. Last year, over three dozen members of law enforcement took GCCI courses held in Brunswick and Bangor.

Quarterly Newsletter Debuts

Maine Operation Lifesaver does good things, and it was felt our partners, associates, and friends should read about our work more often than in this annual report. And so began the publication of Maine O/L's quarterly newsletter. The one-pager highlights recent O/L programs and accomplishments. It also lists places we've been over the past three months spreading the rail safety message. The newsletter can be sent directly to you or can be accessed, including past issues, through the Maine O/L website.

Thousands Learn About Safety Around Rails at Dozens of Events

Some pick up coloring books or brochures, others watch a rail safety video, there are those who talk trains with Maine O/L volunteers, and some just stare in awe at the model train layout on display. They are our guests where we had a presence in 2005. Here's where we were:

- Bath Police Safety Day
- Brewer Train Show
- Whitefield Lions Train Show
- Maine State Museum
- Scarborough Middle School
- Waldo County Hospital Fair
- Maine Driver Education Assn. Conference
- Northeast Loggers Expo, Bangor
- Maine Public Works Assn. Congress
- West Paris Old Home Days
- 470 Day, Waterville - Sanford Lions Train Show
- Fruit Street School, Bangor
- Egg Festival, Pittsfield - Auburn Parks and Recreation
- Paris Hills Bible Church School
- American Folk Festival, Bangor
- Great American Air Show, Brunswick
- Northern New England Safety/Health Conference
- Auburn Mall - New Gloucester Days
- United Methodist Church, Bangor
- Millinocket Christmas Parade
- McLaughlin Foundation Trees and Trains, Paris
- Great Falls Model RR Club, Auburn
- Wal-Mart, Bangor, Biddeford, Brewer

...And Now on the Web

Reaching Maine Operation Lifesaver, either to learn more of its services or to request a presentation or community event exhibit, is now that much easier. The website, at www.maineol.org, is being periodically updated to keep visitors abreast of the organization and its mission. Also included are links to related websites.



One of those links is to the Operation Lifesaver national site at www.oli.org. There, even more services are introduced including statistics, pages for children, and teachers' curricula which dovetails with O/L programs.

Media Assists in O/L Cause

The mission of Maine Operation Lifesaver was met with help from Maine's electronic and print media - some (un)fortunately as a result of train-vehicle and trespass incidents. Here is where the rail safety message appeared:

- Piscataquis Observer, Dover-Foxcroft
- WLBZ-TV, Bangor
- Bangor Daily News
- Penobscot Times, Old Town
- Me. Transport. Safety Coalition newsletter
- Certified Logging Professionals newsletter
- The Weekly, Bangor
- WVII-TV, Bangor
- WCSH-TV, Portland
- Times-Record, Bath
- Lincoln County News, Damariscotta
- WABI-TV, Bangor
- WMSJ, Freeport

Those Reached Through O/L Presentations...

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Driver Education Students	825	794	301	132	250
Driver Education Instructors	0	11	23	8	0
Professional Drivers	153	308	0	172	84
Law Enforcement	0	54	33	57	98
Emergency Responders	935	0	168	123	104
School Bus Drivers	552	0	50	58	1213
Students (preschool - 12)	17472	570	5172	1161	3970
Civic Clubs, others	17	307	41	364	349
TOTALS	19954	2044	5788	2075	6068

For more information, to obtain educational material, or to arrange for a free safety presentation, go to www.maineol.org, e-mail at info@maineol.org, call (207) 827-7367, or write to Maine Operation Lifesaver, 23 Park Street, Old Town, Maine 04468