

Letters, Yes We Send Letters And Op-Eds And...



Each year, I get several reports from alert fellow Maine Operation Lifesaver volunteers about media publishing pictures or broadcasting reports of bad stuff – namely trespassing on railroad property as the reporter, photographer, or cameraman wants to get that perfect shot.

Ironically, the TV news staffer might be warning viewers of the dangers of trespassing, and of course, where is he standing? Right between the rails!

Maine Operation Lifesaver has an obligation to send a letter, or in some cases an e-mail or submit a newspaper opinion piece focusing on the violation. Hopefully the letter has an impact, though I wonder if said reporter guffaws as he reads the letter, then walks over to his assignment editor and they both share a chuckle. Afterall, who's going to get hit by a train?

Mid-way through 2011, a volunteer passed on that parade-goers and participants were walking across a railroad bridge when the highway bridge (including sidewalk) was a mere few yards away. A letter was sent out to the parade organizer, but no reply.

However, we also get some positive results. A Maine newspaper this year printed the picture of a girl crossing a trestle high above a scenic river below. We sent a letter to the editor and it was published. And who can forget the intoxicated man (by his own admission) who rode the passenger train on top of the coach? To the newspaper, it was a novelty story. In Maine O/L's subsequent op-ed piece, it took on a much more serious tone.

Another volunteer suggested we submit a short piece in the Maine Professional Photographers Association's (www.ppmaine.com) newsletter. Editor Crystal Reynolds agreed and it appears in the MPPA's online October-November edition.

So, to our volunteers, keep your eyes peeled. To our railroad partners, know that besides the thousands we reach at presentations and community events, we're on the job even while browsing the newspaper and stretched out on the sofa watching television.

**For more information,
to obtain educational material,
or to arrange for a free safety presentation,
go to www.maineol.org,**

**or
email at: maineol@roadrunner.com**

Call: (207) 945-6878,

or write to:

**Maine Operation Lifesaver
69 Thirteenth Street
Bangor, Maine 04401**

2011 Collisions Up, Trespass Casualties Down

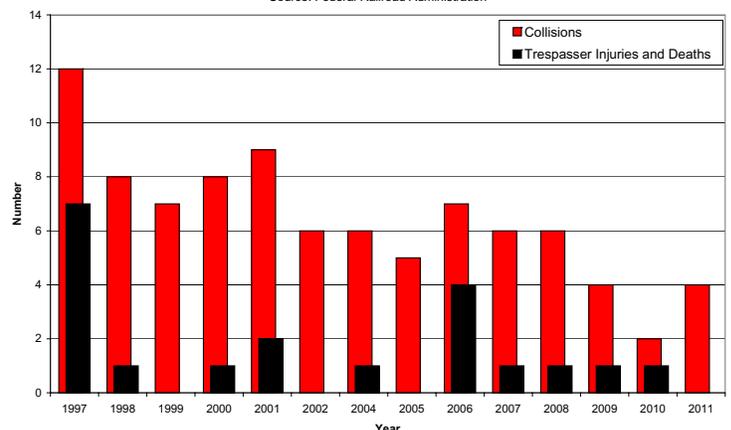
The annual unofficial tally of rail-related crashes with vehicles increased while there were no injuries to trespassers in 2011. There were four train-vehicle crashes last year including one fatality, but no other injuries. Interestingly, the fatality was the driver of a tractor trailer; it was the first deadly crash in Maine in five years when the driver of another semi died in a collision with a train in 2006. Fortunately, on the trespassing side, there were numerous cases reported by railroads, but none resulted in injury which is what is tracked by Maine Operation Lifesaver. We again have graphed such incidents below.

**Miles driven by Maine Operation
Lifesaver volunteers in 2011:
12,891**

Those Reached In 2011 Way Up From Year Before

Focusing again on school children and young adults learning to drive, the number of Maine individuals reached last year was up a significant 46 percent, according to figures reported by nearly three dozen certified Operation Lifesaver presenters. With a renewed emphasis on schools between Portland and the Berwicks which is by far Maine's busiest and fastest rail corridor, elementary and middle school students totaled 3,023, up a whopping 145 percent over 2010. Reaching high schoolers, 666 driver education students received rail safety presentations – a sizable increase of 25 percent over the year before. There were also decreases in reaching some groups, among them school bus and other professional drivers, recreational riders, and new hunters. A full accounting of Mainers directly reached in the name of railroad safety can be found on the second page of this report.

**Maine Train-Vehicle Collisions
and Trespasser Injuries and Deaths**
Source: Federal Railroad Administration



Work Begins Ahead Of Amtrak Extension



More trains and faster trains mean increased awareness for the tens of thousands of residents who live near railroad tracks between Portland and Brunswick. In 2011, the framework for education began on several fronts a year ahead on the

start-up of passenger service scheduled to commence in the fall of 2012. In July, a Maine

Operation Lifesaver meeting took place in Brunswick with representatives from Brunswick, Freeport, and Bowdoin College attending. In the fall, letters were sent to 19 elementary and middle schools along the line requesting



invitations to make presentations to youngsters. Driver ed schools were also contacted to educate new drivers. Also, a meeting was held with Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority officials on how we can work together in the name of rail safety. In November, the first of two presenter training courses was held to recruit new volunteers in the area in anticipation of the major effort. (picture – Among those attending a meeting in Brunswick at council chambers from left: Walt Zaccadelli, David Gilchrist, Maurice Fortin, and Phil Clough.)

(New presenters from left: Jody Tyler, Brian Beeler, Allen Daniels, Catherine Knowles, and instructor Bob Davids)

(New presenters from left: Jody Tyler, Brian Beeler, Allen Daniels, Catherine Knowles, and instructor Bob Davids)

Maine Rail Group Names Maine O/L As Grant recipient

Thank you to the Maine Rail Group, an organization dedicated to promoting freight and passenger rail, for its \$500 grant to Maine Operation Lifesaver. Accompanying the check, MRG President Jack Sutton wrote the grant “is a token of our appreciation for OLS’s important and ongoing contributions to public and railroad safety throughout this region.” Maine O/L has promised to use the grant money as part of its 2012 education program in and around communities between Portland and Brunswick where rails are being upgraded for more trains and at considerably higher speeds.

A Record Audience?

While rail safety presentation audiences vary from a handful to 100 or more, it’s believed 2011 delivered a record assembly, or should it be said Ray Faulkner delivered to a record assembly: 498 students plus 64 teachers and aides for a total of 562 at Kennebunk Elementary School! Ray said he was exhilarated by the crowd he stood before during the half hour presentation. Ray’s presentation was a winner for the school, too. Principal Ryan Quinn wrote, “We all loved it!! Kids and staff alike...Extremely important for our area because the Downeaster comes through an area of our town. It was the perfect length of time and it was engaging for even our youngest (kindergarten) populations.”

Events/Exhibits where Maine Operation Lifesaver participated in 2011

Seashore Trolley Museum, Kennebunk
 United New Auburn Association (3 events)
 American Public Works Assn., Skowhegan
 Maine Emergency Management Assn., Augusta
 Assn. of Public Safety Communications Officials, Rockport
 Brunswick, Freeport, Bangor Fire Dept. Open Houses
 Central Maine Model Railroad Club Train Show, Brewer
 Lowe’s, Bangor and Brewer
 Oxford Fair, Norway
 American Folk Festival, Bangor

Save the Depot, Greenville
 Amtrak 40th Anniversary, Freeport
 Oakfield Railfan Day
 Scarborough Middle School
 National Train Day, Bath and Bangor
 Maine Driver Ed Assn., Bangor
 Topsham Train Show
 Glenburn School
 Lions Train Show, Augusta
 Owl’s Head Transportation Museum

Auburn Mall
 Mast Landing School, Freeport
 Sanford Train Show
 470 Railroad Club, Portland
 Great Falls Model Railroad Show,
 Auburn
 Penobscot County Triad, Bangor
 Safe Schools/Healthy Students,
 Lewiston
 UMaine Volunteer Fair, Orono



Those Reached Through O/L Presentations...

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Driver education students	314	213	206	534	666
Professional drivers	200	66	0	36	5
Law enforcement, first responders	101	123	510	297	233
School bus drivers	141	277	70	437	273
Students (preschool-12)	1038	2376	1487	1236	3023
ATV, snowmobile, hunter safety	0	969	35	706	485
Civic groups, others	338	212	231	200	350
TOTALS	2132	4236	2539	3446	5035