

RAILROAD-HIGHWAY GRADE CROSSINGS

Experts Services

A railroad has the right of way at a grade crossing and those who are crossing a railroad track are bound to exercise care and diligence to ascertain whether a train is approaching. However, the railroad and highway agencies must also exercise care to avoid injury to highway users through the design, construction and maintenance of the crossing and to provide reasonable and timely warning of an approaching train.

The crossing must have appropriate warning signs and/or active warning devices or positive means of control, such as flashing lights (roundels) or roundels in conjunction with gates, all properly placed. The highway user may need an unobstructed sight distance to see if a train is coming.

The construction of a grade crossing also has an impact on persons using the highway other than risk of collision with a train. Very shallow angle crossings can pose a hazard to two-wheeled vehicles, allowing the wheel to get caught in the flangeway, causing loss of control. Proper warning signs and changes to crossing construction can reduce the chance of a wheel entrapment.

Special consideration must also be given to pedestrian control, especially in urban areas. Frequent train activity, multiple tracks and warning devices geared to vehicular traffic pose unique hazards to pedestrians.

Featured Expert: Augustine F. Ubaldi, P.E. | [bio](#)

Mr. Ubaldi has worked on numerous grade crossing cases, both for plaintiffs and defendants, examining all of these aspects. Cases have included situations where roundels did not operate as required or placement of railroad cars on adjacent tracks or other objects obstructed the driver's view. Conversely, in some situations the vehicle operator failed to check for an oncoming train before crossing the track. Other cases have focused on shallow angle grade crossings located on designated bicycle routes.

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