



June 11 — Plenty of Time

<p>Contractors drove their truck across the tracks while a shuttle wagon was pulling rail cars towards them. It was hard to tell at a distance, but my guess is they were maybe 75-100 feet from the shuttle wagon at the time.</p>	<p>Reported. Couldn't make contact with the person.</p>
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Most people who take chances around moving equipment don't think they're taking a chance.

They think they have plenty of time. Plenty of room. Plenty of distance.

An employee observed a contractor driving a truck across railroad tracks while a shuttle wagon was pulling railcars in the contractor's direction. From a distance, it appeared the truck crossed the tracks with the shuttle wagon approximately 75 to 100 feet away.

The employee recognized the situation as a serious risk and reported the incident. Although they were unable to make contact with the driver, the observation highlighted a hazard that can have devastating consequences when people misjudge distance, speed, or stopping capability.

Rail equipment behaves differently than most vehicles we encounter every day. Trucks can brake quickly and maneuver around obstacles. Railcars and shuttle wagons are limited to the tracks beneath them and require significantly more distance to stop. What may appear to be a safe crossing can become dangerous very quickly if a driver assumes they have more time than they actually do.

One of the challenges with vehicle and rail interactions is that people often rely on experience rather than facts. If someone has crossed tracks dozens of times without an issue, they may begin to trust their judgment instead of respecting the hazard. Unfortunately, rail incidents rarely provide a second chance to correct a mistake.

The safest decision is never based on what we think might happen. It's based on ensuring there is no possibility of a conflict before crossing.

Hazards

- Vehicle and railcar collisions
- Struck-by hazards
- Serious injury or fatality
- Equipment damage
- Limited stopping distance of rail equipment
- Misjudging speed or distance

Words of Wisdom

When approaching rail crossings, never assume you have enough time. Wait until you know the crossing can be made safely and without creating a conflict with moving equipment.

Pause and Think

- Have you ever assumed a vehicle or piece of equipment was farther away than it actually was?
- Why is it difficult to judge the speed of rail equipment from a distance?
- What makes railcars and shuttle wagons different from other vehicles?
- How can familiarity with a task lead to risk-taking behaviors?
- What should you do if you're unsure whether it is safe to cross?

Closing Thought

Most close calls begin with the same belief: "I have enough time." The safest choice is making sure you do.