

# Don't run the risk

As train numbers increase to meet burgeoning environmental issues, the NFU's health and safety adviser, **Michael Britten** urges farmers to raise their awareness before crossing the lines.

As railways work hard to heighten the use of networks by increasing the frequency of their trains, they are also working to produce trains that are quieter and faster. This brings them into greater conflict with farmers, who often need to cross lines to gain access to fields or outlying parts of the farm.

In a bid to raise the awareness of those having to use crossings, Network Rail has published information to guide users in the safe use of crossings as part of their 'Level Crossings – Don't Run the Risk' campaign.

Accidents involving trains and vehicles, or people, crossing lines are happily few and far between. But, when they do happen they can be serious and often fatal, with the driver and or occupants of the vehicle involved coming off worst.

And, when larger vehicles are involved, the resulting accident can be more serious and disruptive.

The effects of an accident on those involved can be grave and long lasting. Obviously, those injured or who suffer bereavement will be affected both physically and mentally, possibly for the rest of their lives, particularly if they have lost a loved one.

There have been cases where the train driver, who may not have been injured in the accident, has been unable to continue to work as a driver for a considerable period after the accident and some have been unable to work again.

In practical terms, derailments can cause considerable difficulties for farmers. If the train remains on the track, once the investigation has been completed and the wreckage has been removed the line can be returned to normal use reasonably quickly.

But, if the train has been derailed the recovery time becomes longer and the disruption greater.

## So, who's responsible?

The responsibility for safety when operating a 'user operated crossing' rests with the registered user, who has a duty to ensure that all those who use the crossing are suitably trained in the correct and safe way to cross.

"Railway crossings are dangerous places so don't run the risk"

This registered user is usually the farmer or landowner whose land the railway crosses. When the crossing is used solely by the farmer and his employees, providing information about the safe use of the crossing should form part of the safe system of work and employee training.

Although it may be necessary to secure the crossing so that access is restricted, this

is not always practical. Where there are other users, like dog walkers and ramblers, they are to use the crossing with the agreement of the registered user.

This can either be with the specific agreement of the registered user or as a result of historical practice and usage. Registered users should take action to identify users of crossings for which they are responsible, and ensure they are all informed of the safety measures which are required. It may be necessary to require that some sort of acknowledgement is provided in response.

Further information can be obtained direct from Network Rail (08457 114 141; [www.networkrail.co.uk](http://www.networkrail.co.uk)) or on request from Michael Britten (02476 858 524; [michael.britten@nfu.org.uk](mailto:michael.britten@nfu.org.uk)) at NFU Headquarters.

