



For Immediate Release

NEAR-FATAL RAILROAD TRESPASSING INCIDENT CALLS FOR AWARENESS

INDIANAPOLIS, Tuesday, July 29, 2014 – Railroads, Operation Lifesaver and law enforcement preach three facts on a daily basis: railroad tracks are private property, they are not public thoroughfares, and they are very dangerous.

These realities came into sharp focus at 6:50 a.m. (ET) Thursday, July 10, on Indiana Rail Road's viaduct spanning an inlet of Lake Lemon, 10 miles northeast of Bloomington, Ind., when two female subjects were found trespassing on the middle of the bridge, known as Shuffle Creek Trestle.

The person who first saw the trespassers was the engineer in the lead locomotive of a northbound, 14,000-ton Indiana Rail Road (INRD) freight train traveling at 30 mph. Imagine, if you will, rounding a curve just before a 500-foot-long, 80-foot-high bridge, only to find two subjects sitting in your train's path.

The engineer followed all appropriate protocols, immediately applying an emergency brake application and repeatedly sounded the horn. However, as the subjects ran toward the opposite end of the viaduct, the engineer was helpless to do more. The ever-slowing train was still catching up to the fleeing trespassers.

Nearly every locomotive in North America – including INRD's – is equipped with video cameras for safety and security purposes. Video shows that with more than 100 feet left to the end of the bridge, and the train still catching them, one woman slammed her body onto the ties between the rails. The other veered to the left and nearly fell off the bridge, and then with the locomotive approximately 30 feet away, she too "hit the deck" between the rails.

By the time the train came to a stop, the locomotives were off the bridge; they completely passed the point where the subjects stopped running. The engineer assumed he had just killed two people; Monroe County Sheriff's Department was quickly alerted. Miraculously, however, the two subjects survived, and escaped to a nearby vehicle and fled the scene.

"The consequences of trespassing on railroad-owned property are never taken seriously by those choosing to do so, and this incident at Lake Lemon is one of the most glaring examples I've seen in more than 40 years in this business," said Tom Hoback, founder, president and chief executive officer of Indiana Rail Road Company.

"In this case, not only did two trespassers narrowly escape a horrible death, but had the heavy train derailed due to the emergency brake application – which isn't uncommon – it could have taken down the bridge, possibly killing the engineer as well. The human, environmental and financial toll would have been enormous."

The subjects involved in the Shuffle Creek incident have been identified by law enforcement, and it is now a criminal matter. But the tragic fact remains that 908 people were killed in the United States by trespassing on railroads in 2013; 38 of those unnecessary deaths were in Indiana, and each represents a tragedy that mars the lives of not just the trespasser's family, but railroaders and their families for life.

For more information on trespassing laws, and railroad safety and awareness, visit Operation Lifesaver's website at www.oli.org.

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