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the safe use of user worked crossings.



Translink
ni railways

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2 Preface

A user worked crossing is one where the user opens and shuts the gates.

Every year many people are killed or injured in accidents at level crossings, simply because they fail to follow simple safety rules.

This booklet will give you the information you need to use your crossing safely.

It is the responsibility of the person using the crossing to make sure that it is safe to cross and that railway traffic and other users of the railway are not put in any danger.

If you are the owner of rights over a crossing, in other words, if the crossing gives you access to your property or your land, you have a responsibility to make sure that anyone who uses the crossing also keeps to the rules.

Please remind your visitors, family or employees who use the level crossing that they must keep to the rules.

Help us to make crossings safer by setting a good example.

Please contact us if you need more information.

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4 Knowing the dangers

Modern trains can be virtually silent, particularly on welded rails. Deafness, headphones, vehicle music systems and mobile phones will affect your ability to hear approaching trains.

Weather conditions such as rain, snow, wind and fog may affect the warning you receive of approaching trains. Whenever possible, do not use the level crossing during bad weather.

In particularly windy/stormy weather it may be difficult to communicate with the signaller on the crossing telephone due to background noise. Please ensure you fully understand the signaller's instructions.

Bridges, buildings and embankments may restrict the view of approaching trains in some places.

Leaving gates open can result in children or animals wandering on to the line and may encourage unsuspecting drivers to travel straight on to the level crossing. Ensure gates are secured after use.

Overgrown grass and hedges may affect your ability to see an approaching train.

Be more cautious when it is dark, as confusion may arise between the lights of approaching cars and trains.

You should be aware of the particular dangers the crossing may hold for you.

The following questions will help you to recognise possible dangers with the level crossing that you use.

- Are gates left open at the crossing?
- Do you have to use the crossing during bad weather or when it is dark?



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- Do children use the crossing?
- Do you know where to safely stop to check for approaching trains?
- Do buildings, bridges, vegetation or other features block your view of approaching trains?
- Could noise at the level crossing mask the sound of approaching trains?
- Could anything distract your attention while you are using the level crossing?
- Could something nearby frighten animals when they are crossing?
- Do you use the crossing for any purpose other than what it was designed for?
- If you are an infrequent user, are you aware of the dangers involved?
- Do tailbacks occur on the crossing?
- Could steep slopes cause your vehicle to get stuck?
- Do you move large items of machinery over the crossing?
- Do you use certain crossings only at certain times of the year?
- Do agricultural contractors use the crossing when working for you?

This is not a full list. There may be other dangers that apply to the level crossing you use. You should take time to identify those dangers that apply to you and be aware of them each time you use the level crossing.

Every time you cross the railway, remember to read and obey the signs.

6 Responsibility for other users

Warn other users about the crossing and advise them to take care and keep to the rules.

Other people can include:

- those delivering goods
- service providers
- health professionals
- employees
- agricultural workers
- tenants and any others who may call to your home or farm

Offer others a free copy of this booklet. You can ask us for more free copies (contact details on page 18).

Make sure your visitors also keep to the rules.



Trains

In addition to scheduled trains, other trains are often run. For various reasons, trains may arrive early or be delayed and can also arrive one after the other, in quick succession.

On double tracks, there will be times when trains are running in the opposite direction to normal.

Whenever you use the level crossing, take account of the fastest train that may approach.

Remember, even at a slow speed, a train cannot stop quickly. A train moving at only 60 mph will cover ¼ mile in 15 seconds.

If you see a train approaching, do not use the crossing.



⑧ The condition of the level crossing

Contact us if the user worked crossing gates, fences, surfaces, cattle-grids, signs or phones need repairs. Also report any unauthorised use or trespassing at the crossing.

Make sure that the slope up to the railway line is not too severe for your vehicle or machinery.

Make sure that the level crossing is wide enough to use.

Never try to alter the level crossing without our written permission.

We try to keep maximum sighting distances by trimming banks and cutting grass, bushes and trees. Please ring us immediately if any views are being obscured.



Pedestrians and cyclists

⑨

- When approaching the railway, pedestrians and cyclists should always read the signs and follow the instructions.
- When standing clear of the railway line, keep at least two metres (6 feet) from the nearest rail.
- Take care not to push a pram too close to the line when looking out for trains to pass.
- Never allow children, especially with bicycles, to cross the railway alone.
- If you are on a bicycle, get off and walk across the line, even if the gates are open.
- If any equipment becomes tangled on the crossing or in the track, leave it there and move clear of the railway line.
- Keep any dogs on leads when using a crossing.
- If a previous user has left the user worked crossing gates open, shut and fasten them immediately.
- If you notice any problem with a level crossing, phone us with details of the problem immediately.



10 Driving vehicles across the railway

It is your responsibility to make sure it is safe for you to cross the railway and to ensure that other users of the railway are not put in any danger.

When crossing with a vehicle:

- read the signs and follow the instructions
- if there is a phone, use it to contact the signaller & ask if it is safe to cross
- if a phone is not provided, stop, look both ways and listen
- when the line is clear, open both gates and look in both directions before crossing
- always close the gates after crossing; and
- ring again to confirm you are clear

In the case of field crossings, make sure the gates are properly secured and that they are padlocked when not in use.

Make sure that your vehicle, including towbar, trailer and any other attachments, are in good working order, and unlikely to stall on the railway. In particular, make sure that the handbrake is in good working order.

Make sure that all windows are clear and that nothing is blocking your view.



11 Driving unusually long, wide, low, heavy or slow vehicles across the railway, or vehicles with dangerous substances

You must get our permission to cross the railway line in good time. You should let the controlling signaller know the type of vehicle you are in and how long it is likely to take. We may need to make special arrangements. Always let us know when you have gone across to confirm you are clear.

Any vehicle that is large or slow is defined as:

- Over 61ft 6ins (18.75m) long, or
- Over 44 tonnes in weight, or
- Over 9ft 6ins (2.9m) wide, or
- Unable or unlikely to go more than 5mph over the crossing

Always telephone to get permission before herding animals across the crossing.



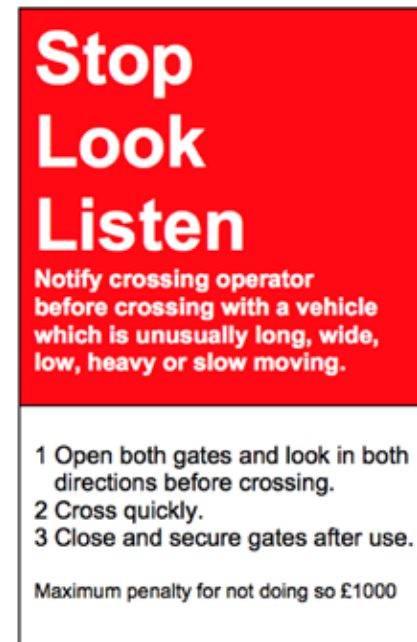
12 Farm and other business activities

- You must follow the instructions given on the signs at the crossing every time you cross.
- Responsibility for safety when operating a user worked crossing rests with the user.
- You must ensure that other users of your crossing are instructed in how to use it safely. This includes employees, contractors, postal staff, drivers of delivery vehicles and visitors.
- You should prepare a safe system of work for the use of the user worked crossing.
- The safe system of work should include the provision of any additional safety measures required for temporary increased use of the user worked crossing, including advising NI Railways.
- You should provide as much advance notice as possible of any increase of use or change in use of the crossing to the NI Railways Level Crossing Risk Coordinator (contact details page 18).
- The safe system of work should take account of particular users such as casual workers who may have a limited understanding of English.
- If you own a farm or other business, use of the user worked crossing should be included in your risk assessments.
- Changes in level crossing use should be agreed with NI Railways. You should advise NI Railways of any change in use of the crossing.

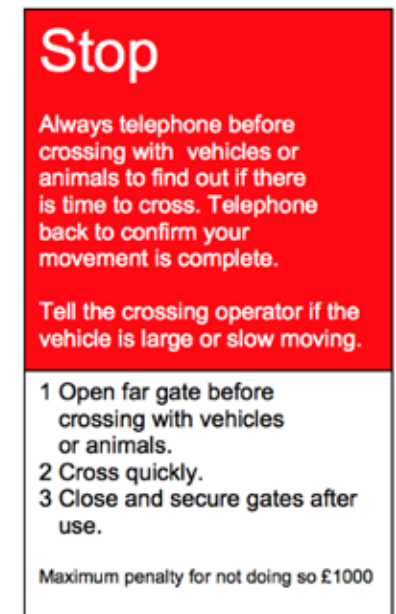


13 User worked crossing signs

There are a number of signs that may be placed at user worked crossings depending on the type and location of the crossing. Most private crossings will have one of the signs illustrated below:



Instructions for use at a vehicular crossing **without** a telephone.



Instructions for use at a vehicular crossing **with** a telephone.

14 MSL (Miniature Stop Light) Crossings

Some crossings are protected by miniature red/green lights and audible warning equipment.

The equipment is operated automatically by the approach of trains. The green lights will normally show and they will change to red when a train approaches.

When the red light shows, a train can reach the crossing in 40 seconds. An audible alarm will also sound when the red lights show.

Some MSL crossings also have crossing barriers. Buttons are provided for raising and lowering the barriers.

Please note that these barriers must not be raised when the red light is showing and a train is approaching.

After you have raised the barriers always re-check that the green light is still showing before you cross.

If the light is not working, you must phone the crossing operator via the telephone at the crossing for permission to cross.



15 The legal position on user worked crossings

- It is the responsibility of the person using the crossing to make sure that it is safe to cross over, and that railway traffic and other users of the railway are not put in any danger.
- An accommodation crossing (providing access between fields) is to be used for normal farm activities.
- Other traffic over a crossing, arising from developing any new business or activity on the landowner's or nearby property, is not allowed.
- An occupation level crossing is for the owner to gain access to property. Only those who live in the property and their visitors may use the crossing.
- We do not allow accommodation crossings to be used for a purpose for which they are not designed.
- If you use a crossing, it is illegal not to close the gates after use.
- If a phone is provided, it is illegal not to use it as instructed.
- You may have to pay a £1000 fine for failing to shut the level crossing gates, or use the telephone as instructed.



16 Contacting the Signaller

- If the level crossing has a phone, always use it before driving a vehicle across the railway or herding animals across it.
- If there is no phone, you can contact the controlling signal box - numbers detailed on page 17 and on the crossing signage.
- Always ring back after you have crossed.
- If you cannot get a reply when phoning the signaller, you must be very careful when crossing. If you need permission, you must not try to cross the line until you have contacted the signaller and got permission.
- Always ring for permission to cross when herding animals.

Always give:

- the crossing name and number
- your name; and
- the reason for the call



Contacting the Signaller

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Signalboxes:

Telephone numbers:

Belfast South

Telephone number 028 9089 9438
Emergency number 028 9032 8237

(For crossings between Belfast and Bangor.)

Belfast North

Telephone number 028 9089 9440
Emergency number 028 9032 8237

(For crossings between Belfast and Lisburn, Belfast and Larne, Belfast and Kellswater, South Ballinderry and Antrim on the Antrim Branch Line.)

Portadown

Telephone number 028 3833 3053
Emergency number 028 3836 2048

(For crossings between Lisburn and the Border, Lisburn and Ballinderry on the Antrim Branch Line)

Coleraine South

Telephone number 028 7034 2249
Emergency number 028 7032 1860

(For crossings between Coleraine and Kellswater North, Coleraine and Portrush)

Coleraine North

Telephone number 028 7032 7561
Emergency number 028 7032 1860

(For crossings between Coleraine and Derry~Londonderry)

18 Contacting Head Office

If you are selling your land, letting out land or changing tenants, you must let us know immediately. Always give any tenants a copy of this booklet and make sure they keep to the contents as a term of letting the property.

If you are the owner of rights over a level crossing and you are interested in discussing options to close your crossing(s), please contact us.

Options for closure include, but are not limited to:

- Buying the right-of-way
- Providing alternate access (e.g. laneway)
- Land purchase

To have a no obligation discussion of the potential options for your crossing(s), please contact the NI Railways Level Crossing Risk Manager.

**To contact the NIRailways
Level Crossing Risk Manager:**

Tel. 028 9035 5444

Email: crossings@translink.co.uk

Web: www.translink.co.uk/level-crossing-safety



Emergencies

If you get into difficulty with a vehicle at a crossing:

- **Get everyone out of the vehicle immediately**
- **Move everyone to a position of safety well clear of the railway tracks (at least 2 metres from the nearest rail)**
- **Ring the controlling signalbox**

If you get into difficulty as a result of straying animals, ring the controlling signalbox immediately.

Your emergency information

Crossing name _____

Crossing number _____

Controlling signalbox _____

**Controlling signalbox
emergency number** _____

Never use the emergency telephone number for any purpose other than an emergency. This information is important. Please keep this booklet in a safe place.



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