

Engineers Have Feelings Too

The following article was sent to 13 different news papers after the Fox River Grove, Illinois accident, a school bus train collision.

November 01, 1995

Dear Editor in Chief

I am an employee of the Union Pacific Railroad, my full time occupation is a locomotive engineer. Every day that I go to work I am faced with the possibility of the same kind of incident (a bus/train collision) that happened in Fox River Grove, IL. If you were to ask any engineer, "What are you most afraid of in your daily operation of a train as to railroad crossings?" They would probably tell you a loaded school bus. One of the most dreaded and frightening things in the world for an engineer and his train crew is to be bearing down on a school bus, all the brakes are set, but everyone knows they won't be able to stop in time. Your sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, cousins and grand children may die. Families will grieve. Classrooms will be empty. Children with the potential to be anything in the world will now be nothing. They leave behind empty spaces in graduation lines, and empty spaces in all our hearts. Children, yours and mine, are what I am talking about.

The railroads business is hauling cargo and that is very important to us, but bus drivers carry a more important cargo, the most precious cargo of all, our children. For those drivers who do not know it, it is against the law to drive around gates while they are in the down position, with the lights flashing and bells sounding. Those drivers are breaking the law and are subject to a fine for doing so.

Most railroads have Operation Lifesaver Teams. Their goal is to reduce accidents by reminding everyone of the dangers at every railroad crossing. Their number one concern is your safety. Call the Union Pacific Railroad and ask for a manager who can set up an Operation Lifesaver Presentation for your school, civic club or any organization. These presentations are for anyone that does not want to be exposed to the tragedy of railroad crossing accidents. It should not take a tragedy like the one in Fox River Grove, IL to expose the devastation that a crossing accident can have on all of our lives. Out of all of the news paper articles and TV coverage on that accident there was no mention of the locomotive engineer and his train crew, or the emotional trauma that they had to go through. A picture of that school bus full of children will be engraved in their minds forever, like you would put a hammer and chisel to granite, it will remain etched in their minds and hearts and no kind of therapy can ever make them forget.

Please don't be caught dead at a railroad crossing. Those gates, lights, and bells are put there to save your life; so let them.

Take just a few seconds the next time you approach a railroad crossing,

TAKE TIME TO LOOK , LISTEN AND LIVE!!!!!!

Sincerely yours,

James Ussery

Locomotive Engineer