



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Powell Police Helping to Organize Railroad Crossing 'Safety Blitz'

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Powell, OH: The City of Powell Police Department, in partnership with Ohio Operation Lifesaver, the Delaware County Railroad Safety Task Force and CSX Police, has scheduled a special grade crossing educational safety blitz on West Olentangy Street at the CSX railroad tracks.

During the safety blitz, which is scheduled from 4 to 6 p.m. on Wednesday, May 19, motorists stopped in traffic will be approached briefly by members of the Delaware County Railroad Safety Task Force, who will provide them with a safety brochure and ask them to obey the law and drive responsibly at railroad crossings.

"Our goal is to heighten the safety awareness of our citizens who drive in this location and encourage them not to place themselves or others in a potentially deadly situation," said Shel Senek, state coordinator for Ohio Operation Lifesaver, a national nonprofit public safety education organization.

Powell Police Chief Gary Vest said he is concerned about the number of motorists backed up in traffic at the four corners intersection – especially during rush hour – that get stopped on the railroad tracks.

"Stopping on the tracks, compounded with having cars ahead of and behind you that prevent you from moving your vehicle, is not only dangerous but also could result in a deadly scenario should a train approach. It is illegal to stop on the tracks," Vest said.

Senek said motorists who stop on the tracks place not only themselves and their occupants at risk, but also the train crew and the community.

"A vehicle/train collision could potentially cause a derailment, thus creating a catastrophic incident," Senek said. "Motorists should position themselves at the stop line, or if none is available, at least 15 feet from the nearest rail when stopped in traffic."

Senek said about every two hours in the U.S., a person or a vehicle has an incident with a train. Ohio ranks 8th in the nation for grade crossing collisions and 11th in nation for grade crossing fatalities. During 2009, 55% of Ohio collisions with trains occurred at crossings where the gates and/or lights were in operation at the time of the crash.

"A motorist traveling 55 miles per hour takes about 200 feet to stop their vehicle," Senek said. "A train traveling 55 miles per hour takes the length of about 18 football fields to stop."

For more information, contact the national Operation Lifesaver office at (800) 537-6224 or log on to the Ohio Operation Lifesaver Web site at www.ohol.org.

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