

# Safety Canada

THE MEMBER NEWSLETTER OF THE CANADA SAFETY COUNCIL

## Despite Lac-Mégantic tragedy, rail safety is improving

In light of that terrible tragedy in Lac-Mégantic, Que., Transport Canada will be taken to task in many quarters regarding its commitment to rail safety in this country. We all look forward to the Transportation Safety Board's report into that awful train accident which took lives, injured others, caused extensive property damage and basically decimated a proud and vibrant community.

Between 2003 and 2007, the yearly average number of main-track derailments was 103. That did not include the number of non-main-track derailments, mainly in yards or terminals.

As regulator, Transport Canada, with overall responsibility for railway safety, conducts audits of how a railway company maintains its safety-management systems. It does not engage in the inspection of tracks and switches. The

companies' safety responsibilities include day-to-day safety and inspections.

Transport Canada and the industry are now approaching safety with encouraging and positive results. Since 2007, train accidents in this country have decreased by 23 per cent and passenger train accidents by 19 per cent. In addition, there were 16 main-track derailments for the first quarter of 2012, representing a significant decrease from the 2011 total of 38 and the total five-year average of 34. In addition, from January to March 2012, total accidents by million train miles are 11.33, down from 14.29 in 2011 and the five-year average of 14.3.

### Why is this happening?

Transport Canada does indeed take rail safety very seriously and continues to take action to ensure that rail safety is a

high priority. Just a few years ago, the government increased the Rail Safety Directorate's financial resources by \$72 million in order to enhance railway safety oversight, and an additional 25 inspectors were hired. Additional resources were also assigned to education and awareness such as the Operation Lifesaver Program, a joint program of the Canada Safety Council, the Railway Association of Canada and Transport Canada that educates Canadians about the hazards surrounding rail property and trains in an effort to prevent trespassing incidents that lead to death and serious injury.

Transport Canada also recently promoted amendments to the Railway Safety Act through Bill S-4, which received royal assent in May 2012. These amendments will strengthen Transport Canada's oversight and enforcement powers to ensure compliance with all safety regulations by the railway companies. These important changes can only encourage rail companies to create, maintain, and enhance a culture of safety, which is happening.

One important category that has also shown significant improvement when it comes to rail freight is the discharge of dangerous goods. Statistics show an ongoing downward trend. The Lac-Mégantic incident aside, most leaks, fortunately, are small. The Canada Safety

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# President's Perspective

## When safety fails

As details of the Lac-Mégantic tragedy slowly emerge, questions linger about what went wrong and how similar disasters can be prevented in the future. Ongoing investigations will no doubt reveal that somewhere along the line, safety failed.

In a matter of minutes, a bad choice or an oversight can become dangerous, deadly and irreversible. This is a difficult lesson, but one that we can thoughtfully apply to our daily lives.

While there is no single reason why things go wrong, there are common themes for why people fail to give safety the consideration it deserves.

Sometime it is because of a lack of education or proper training. People may not realize or respect the potential for danger. Memory also fails and technology changes, which is why taking refresher courses is so important.

At other times, there are engineering problems or mechanical failures. Distractions or carelessness or impairment can also quickly culminate in disaster. Familiarity might create the feeling that you know a process or procedure so well that you couldn't make a mistake. This is one reason professional pilots always refer to a checklist when about to undertake critical aspects of a flight such as landings and takeoffs.

Sometimes it is a lack of enforcement. All the regulations in the world will not make a difference if monitoring is inadequate or if violations go without consequences. It might be valuing efficiency over safety. It might even be – and often is – human error.

With all the possibilities for things to go wrong, it is important and encouraging to recognize that prevention is possible and necessary to minimize avoidable death, injury and damage to property.

The costs of not doing so are simply far too high.

It is estimated that preventable incidents claim more than 13,000 lives and cost Canadians nearly \$20 billion every year in health care costs and lost productivity, according to a 2009 study by SMARTRISK.

Safety should never be an afterthought and it should never be forgotten. A safety-orientated attitude is one of the best defences against the unpredictable.

Safety training is most often associated with workplaces, but the idea of being safety-oriented is something that needs to be brought home every day. Talk about safety with the people in your life – your friends, your children and your co-workers. Take steps to make your home, school and community a safer place.

Do your part and give safety the consideration it deserves. It might just save a life.

### *Safety, It's an Attitude*



Jack Smith, President



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Council and others attribute this decrease in incidents involving dangerous goods to the proactive stance and leadership over the years by the Transportation Of Dangerous Goods (TDG) Secretariat, which falls under the auspices of the Minister of Transport. The TDG General Policy Advisory Council has played and continues to play a large role in this success. This council which meets twice a year brings together stakeholders (police, firefighters, industry, including rail, provincial governments, unions, safety interests and others) with different interests and agendas. But at the end of the day, through consensus and thoughtful discussion, decisions affecting the movement of dangerous goods are made in the best interests of public health and safety of all Canadians.

Rail safety in this country is improving. And that is great news. Let's make sure we keep it on track.

## Some seasonal safety reminders

- Summertime, swimming and safety: Talk with children about safety around water. The single most important aspect of drowning prevention is supervision. Supervise your children at all times when they are in, on or around water. Never leave children alone in or near a pool – not even for a moment. Minimize distractions when you are supervising others; for example, put the cellphone away and stay alert.
- Set a good example for your kids – wear a helmet when cycling!
- Nine to 10 people are killed and between 100 and 150 people are injured each year by lightning in Canada, according to Environment Canada. When you become aware of an approaching storm, seek shelter as soon as possible in a safe location, such as a house. Once inside, stay away from electrical appliances and equipment, doors, windows, fireplaces, and anything else that will conduct electricity, such as sinks, tubs and showers. After the last rumble of thunder, stay inside for 30 minutes.

**Looking for more seasonal advice? Follow us on Twitter for updates: @CanadaSafetyCSC.**



## Camp fire safety tips

Light camp fires in designated areas only. If a fire pit is available at the campsite, use it after making sure it is free of hazards. Otherwise, look for some bare ground.

- Clear debris such as leaves or twigs away in a three-metre diameter area around the fire site, and build a circle of rocks to prevent the fire from spreading.
- Adults, not kids, should start campfires. Use tinder (e.g. dry needles or grass) or crumpled newspaper to ignite the fire — never gas.
- Keep the fire under adult surveillance at all times: supervise children

and pets; and prevent the fire from getting too big or sparks from flying into the bush.



- Have a bucket of water, sand and a shovel handy.
- Totally extinguish the fire before you go to sleep or when you leave the site.
- Always carry a flashlight to find your way at dusk or in the dark and to help others find you — one flashlight per person.

# News Bites

- We received 34 applications for the Sarah Beth Therien Memorial Scholarship. The applications came from all over Canada and the safety initiatives are very diverse, ranging from efforts to improve farm safety to anti-bullying projects. It is encouraging and inspiring to read about young Canadians taking proactive steps to improve safety in their homes, schools and communities.

The selection process is underway. We expect to announce the scholarship recipient before the end of August. If you are interested in donating to support the scholarship program in 2014, please contact us at 613.739.1535 ext. 221.

- We have partnered with Loyalist College to create two new online courses.
- Online Babysitter Training Course: this course is for young people turning 12 within the calendar year, or older, who want to demonstrate their capabilities by completing the course under responsible direction. The course includes special features such as information on the rights and responsibilities of the babysitter, and information on handling emergencies and caring for a sick child. For more information or to register, please visit our website at [www.canadasafetycouncil.org/training/babysitters-training-course-online](http://www.canadasafetycouncil.org/training/babysitters-training-course-online).
- Online Home Alone Program. This program will teach children 10 years and older the necessary skills and knowledge to be safe and responsible when home alone for short periods of time. It will help them understand how to prevent problems and how to keep safe and constructively occupied. For more information or to register, please visit our website at [www.canadasafetycouncil.org/training/home-alone-program-online](http://www.canadasafetycouncil.org/training/home-alone-program-online).
- Our project is now complete with Bridgestone Americas to launch Canadian content for [www.TeensDriveSmart.ca](http://www.TeensDriveSmart.ca). The website offers information for kids, parents, teachers, and teens on the dangers, challenges and responsibilities facing new drivers. Many resources are available on the website to raise awareness about how best to support new drivers in preparing for the road ahead. The content is available in English and French.

- CSC spokespersons are very active this summer raising awareness of the dangers posed by leaving children in vehicles unattended. Two deadly tragedies – one in Ontario and another in Edmonton – and several close-calls have garnered national media attention and generated much discussion on how to prevent similar incidents.
- Looking for frequent updates on what's happening at the Canada Safety Council? Follow us on Twitter @CanadaSafetyCSC.



**Many resources are available to raise awareness about how best to support new drivers in preparing for the road ahead.**

## Looking ahead

- The 108th Annual Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACCP) Conference is scheduled for August 17 – 21 in Winnipeg, MB.

The theme for this year's conference is 'Communication: at the Centre of It All.' Topics to be covered include social networking and the need to remain ahead of existing trends as a critical component to effective police management. Effective communication affects law enforcement and ultimately, the safety and security of Canadian citizens. For more information on the conference and to register, visit <http://cacpconference.ca>.

- We are currently researching incidents of fires and damage caused by rechargeable batteries and their chargers. The goal is to create an educational campaign to raise awareness among Canadians of the dangers rechargeable batteries and their chargers pose if misused or abused. This campaign may coincide with National School Safety Week in October.

- For the second year in a row, we are partnering with State Farm® to promote 'Celebrate My Drive,' a program that supports safe teen driving in our communities. More information on this partnership will be made available in the October issue of Safety Canada.

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## Look ahead to *Living Safety*

*Living Safety* is the Canada Safety Council's quarterly off-the-job safety magazine. Our fall issue is available in September. Here's a sneak peak!

- Pedestrian Safety in Canada
- Type 2 Diabetes
- Canning Safety
- Traffic Safety Quiz

Know someone who would be interested in subscribing to *Living Safety*? Please direct them to our website, [www.canadasafetycouncil.org](http://www.canadasafetycouncil.org), or contact the CSC at 613.739.1535 ext. 221.

## Surviving summer smog

(NC) — Summer is here, bringing longer days and warmer temperatures – but with that heat also comes smog. Smog is the combination of smoke and fog, a form of air pollution that can occur at any time of the year, but is heaviest in the warmer months from April to September. This polluted air can stealthily cause damage to your lungs even when you can't see or smell it around you.

Smog can result in coughing, wheezing, and difficulty breathing — and for people who have lung diseases like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), it can have much more serious effects. COPD, which includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis, causes narrowing of the lung airways. Symptoms include shortness of breath, coughing, wheezing and coughing up phlegm. Smog can make those symptoms worse – also known as a lung attack. Lung attacks can lead to hospitalization, restricted mobility and can increase the risk of death.

Every year, 5,900 deaths in Canada's eight largest cities are attributed to smog.

When you feel bogged down by scorching summer heat, remember smog can be crippling to your lung health, but there are steps you can take to help you breathe more easily:



- **Know the Air Quality Index scale.**

Adjust your outdoor activities for that day as needed and try to avoid exposure to air pollution, cigarette smoke and breathing humid air.

- **Know yourself.** If you notice you are regularly short of breath or have an ongoing cough, speak to your physician about a COPD assessment. If you do suffer from COPD, your doctor can help you manage your condition so that you can take part in the activities you enjoy, no matter what season.

- **Know the signs of a lung attack.**

If you have a lung disease like COPD and notice any significant changes like increased coughing, wheezing or an unusual change in phlegm, contact your physician. Discuss your worsening symptoms and also ask if your medication dosages need an adjustment.

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# Respect the rails - stay off the tracks!

A recent incident in Montreal is highlighting the significant, life-changing and potentially deadly consequences of trespassing on railway property.

According to news reports, a 30-year-old woman was part of a group of people attempting to pass between the cars of a stopped freight train in Montreal after 2 a.m. on June 12. As the woman was climbing between the cars, the train began to move. She fell – the train passed over her, severing her legs.

The Canada Safety Council urges Canadians to recognize that it is against the law to be on railway property. Further, the consequences of trespassing are often swift, severe and unforgiving.

Across Canada in 2012, there were 78 fatalities and 53 serious injuries among 261 incidents involving railway crossings and trespassers, according to Operation Lifesaver (a partner of the CSC). The losses of life, limb and property from incidents such as these are tremendous – but they are preventable.

The safety message is simple: stay off and stay away from all trains, tracks and railway property at all times! Operation Lifesaver advises the following:

- Use designated level crossings to cross train tracks.
- Obey the signs and signals near railway crossings – flashing lights and bells mean the train is coming so be safe and stay away.
- Stop, look and listen before you cross just to make sure it is safe.
- Stay away from the edge of the platform while waiting for the train at the station. Stay behind the platform safety line.
- Stay away from trains and tracks and off railway property.
- Say “NO” to trespassing on tracks or railway property.

***Talk with your children railway safety. Tracks are for trains, not for people!***

## Rail facts

- There are approximately 73,000 km of railway tracks in Canada
- A motorist is 40 times more likely to die in a crash involving a train than in a collision involving another motor vehicle.
- Most collisions occur within 40 km of the motorist’s home.
- Trains CANNOT stop quickly. An average freight train travelling at 100 km/h requires about 2 km to stop. A passenger train travelling at 160 km/h requires about the same distance to stop. Compare that to an automobile travelling at 90 km/h, which requires about 60 metres to stop.
- Railway tracks, trestles, yards and equipment are private property. Walking or playing on them is illegal. Trespassers are subject to arrest and fines. Too often the penalty is death.



## Stay away, stay alive!

- NEVER take shortcuts on or around train tracks – it is dangerous.
- NEVER throw things at trains – you could hurt someone.
- NEVER put objects on train tracks – they can fly off and hurt someone – maybe you.
- NEVER walk in front of or behind a stopped train – it could move suddenly.
- NEVER walk or climb between parked railway cars – they can move at any time and you can get hurt.
- NEVER enter open boxcars – the doors can shut suddenly and trap you there.
- NEVER use railway tunnels and bridges as shortcuts – a train can come at any time.

## Teeing off? Think of safety first!

With the sun beaming down during the summer months and the smell of freshly-cut grass in the air, the conditions are as perfect as possible to head out on the golf links and shoot 18 holes.

Unlike most sports, golf doesn't seem to inherently hold much risk. But don't be fooled by the sport's easy-going nature: there are still plenty of ways you can get hurt on the green. Take note of these simple tips to help make sure your golf game goes as smoothly and safely as possible.

- Stretch before starting your game. Flexibility exercises are a great way to loosen up. Even a few minutes of making yourself limber will drastically reduce your chances of pulling or straining a muscle.
- Heatstroke and sunburns can affect anyone, even veteran golfers. Be sure to wear a hat with a brim, drink plenty of water throughout the day, and use sun-block. Don't be fooled by the clouds above – you can still get a sunburn on an overcast day.
- Protect your eyes from the sun. Wear UVA/UVB protective sunglasses.

- Teeing off early in the day means you will likely finish before the sun hits its peak intensity by mid-afternoon. Start early and spend the afternoon relaxing in the shade.
- If you see a storm coming, leave the golf course immediately and seek shelter indoors. Golf clubs (the metal kind) act like lightning



rods and make a player on a treeless stretch of the course an easy target.

- Yelling "fore" after hitting the ball doesn't absolve you of blame if you hit someone. Make sure the course ahead is clear before you take your swing.

- Check that everyone in your group is standing behind the person hitting the ball. If the ball takes an unexpected hook or slice, everyone in the ball's immediate vicinity will be safely behind it.
- If you are on the course either as a player or a spectator and you hear a warning shout, cover your head with your arms and bend down. You're not likely going to be able to see the ball and get out of the way in time, so this way if the ball does hit you, it'll hit your back instead of your head.
- Treat golf carts the same way you would treat a car. Watch for pedestrians; don't drive too fast; signal your turns; don't drive too close to ponds and other water bodies; and don't drink and drive. Also, don't park on a hill where the cart could topple over.

When played safely and responsibly, golf can be a great way to have fun, get a bit of exercise, and share some quality time with friends outdoors. Put the odds on your side this summer – play it safe so that sand traps are the only hazards you'll have to contend with on the golf course this summer.

# Safety Canada

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