Trains can't stop quickly or swerve. The average freight train is about 1 to 1¼ miles in length (90 to 120 rail cars). When it's moving at 55 miles an hour, it can take a mile or more to stop after the locomotive engineer fully applies the emergency brake. An 8-car passenger train moving at 80 miles an hour needs about a mile to stop. How does this compare to other vehicles?

According to the National Safety Council:

- A lightweight passenger car traveling at 55 miles an hour can stop in about 200 feet in an emergency - under perfect conditions - that is, if tires and brakes are in good condition and the road is dry.
- A commercial van or bus will need about 230 feet to stop.
- A commercial truck/trailer can stop in about 300 feet - that's the length of a football field.
- A light rail train requires about 600 feet to stop - the length of two football fields.
- Compared to this, the average freight train we mentioned above traveling at 55 miles an hour may take the length of about 18 football fields to stop.

Trains can't swerve - they can only follow the track. The only thing the engineer can do is apply the emergency brake.

**It's Closer and Faster Than You Think!**
In the same way that airplanes can seem to move slowly, your eyes can play a trick on you when a train is approaching - an optical illusion that makes a train seem farther away and moving more slowly than it really is. Don't take chances - it's easy to misjudge a train's speed and its distance, especially at night. If you see a train, just wait.

**Acknowledgments:**
Operation Lifesaver
Minnesota Operation Lifesaver