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TRAIN AND TRACK SAFETY: STOPPING DISTANCE

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](#)



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