

This is the official newsletter of **Operation Lifesaver Utah (OL Utah)**, a nonprofit public safety education and awareness organization dedicated to reducing collisions, fatalities and injuries at highway-rail crossings and trespassing on railroad tracks.

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## State Coordinator's Message – Operation Lifesaver Utah Holds Training Meeting

Operation Lifesaver Utah held its annual training update for all authorized volunteers on Tuesday, December 13, 2016 at the Utah Trucking Association training room in West Valley City. Authorized volunteers received updates about the OL program in Utah. Walt Webster, Assistant State Coordinator, welcomed everyone to the event and then coordinated with all those in attendance about the driver's education classes in the high schools across the state. Then the volunteers separated into six areas and coordinated with the area coordinators. Everyone reassembled and Vern Keeslar, State Coordinator, showed the three new animated public service announcements – No Video is Worth the Risk, No Selfie is Worth the Risk, and No Photo is Worth the Risk. Vern also discussed continuing the OL Utah Newsletter on a quarterly basis, volunteering at the OL booth, reporting presentations, and thanking the volunteers for all of their good work and how they each make a difference! A prize drawing and lunch followed the training event.

Long-time volunteer Brent Chaston was honored for 18 years of dedicated service as an OL volunteer having worked as a school bus driver trainer for the Jordan and Park City School Districts training hundreds of school bus drivers resulting in the safe travel of tens of thousands of students. Brent was one of the first school bus driver presenters. Brent became an OL volunteer in 1998 and retired from the Park City School District in November 2016. Thanks Brent for all you did for rail safety education in Utah!



Picture of Brent Chaston receiving Operation Lifesaver Utah's Outstanding Dedication and Service Award from State Coordinator Vern Keeslar at the annual training event on December 13, 2016.

## New Operation Lifesaver Video Warns Filming on Train Tracks is Illegal, Deadly

Alarmed by several deadly incidents involving people making videos near railroad tracks, the national nonprofit rail safety education group Operation Lifesaver, Inc. (OLI) released a new animated video to warn amateur filmmakers and smart phone users of the dangers and illegality of using train tracks for videos. The new video is the latest in a series drawing attention to illegal and dangerous activities involving train tracks.

“Operation Lifesaver and our partners at the Federal Railroad Administration, which funded the video, are concerned about this deadly trend,” said OLI President and CEO Bonnie Murphy.

“Since 2015, three people have died making videos on or near train tracks. Our new video makes it clear that taking videos on or near train tracks is not only illegal, it’s a bad idea,” she stated. Murphy said the video will be available on the OLI website and via social media.

“Our message to the public is that train tracks are never a good place to take videos of your family or for a school project; what seems innocent can quickly turn to tragedy,”

said Karl Alexy, director, FRA office of safety analysis. “Trespassing on private railroad tracks and property is always illegal and often fatal, because trains can’t stop quickly to avoid hitting someone on the tracks. Always expect a train on any track, in either direction, at any time.”

While preliminary statistics for 2015 from the FRA show that trespass deaths and injuries dropped by two percent from 2014, early indications are that trespass incidents are rising substantially in 2016. Rail-related trespass deaths rose 19.8 percent from January through August 2016 compared to the same period in 2015, and injuries rose 12 percent, statistics show.

“Rail trespass deaths and injuries are especially heartbreaking because they are preventable,” Murphy said. “We want people to know these tragic incidents are on the rise, reversing progress we were seeing with our ongoing *“See Tracks? Think Train!”* rail safety education campaign. Please spread the word to family and friends, and help us reverse this startling trend.”

## OL Utah Booth Update

Thanks for all those who participate in the booths sharing the Operation Lifesaver safety messages. Operation Lifesaver Utah attended the following events during the last quarter of 2016.

- The Kaysville Safety Fair on October 12, 2016 at the Kaysville Fire Department.
- The Woods Cross Elementary Safety Fair on October 26, 2016 at Woods Cross Elementary.
- The Intermountain Train Expo on November 5 and 6, 2016 in Sandy.



Picture is the Operation Lifesaver Utah booth at the Intermountain Train Expo in Sandy at the South Towne Expo Center on November 5, 2016.