

PRESS RELEASE

Taking risks? You will pay! Sometimes even with your life...

Liberec, 12 April 2016. Today, the preventive safety event "Taking risks? You will pay!" took place, organised by Správa železniční dopravní cesty (the Czech Railway Infrastructure Administration) and the Czech Police. Through this pilot event which took place on the territory of the Liberec Region, both institutions want to warn of risky behaviour of drivers and pedestrians while moving on the railway and at railway crossings.

In the Liberec Region only, two people died in the trackage this year. There were 9 fatalities in 2014 and even 15 fatalities a year later. More than 85% of all collisions with pedestrians occur outside a railway crossing. A great danger for cutting across tracks may be e.g. a simple audio headpiece or a cell phone. With a headpiece, the pedestrian cannot hear nearing danger. Suffice then to look around poorly or to approach tracks carelessly. When a person listens to music or has a phone call he/she cannot hear an approaching train or its hoot. Moreover, modern electrical trains are so silent that even with no earpiece at all you can hear it in the last minute only. In this situation, people tend to panic and a fall into a trackage directly under the wheels of a train in motion is imminent.

"Reckless passengers cutting across tracks not only break laws and risk a penalty up to five thousand crowns but they are especially risking their lives. A passenger train running at 80 kph, even if it uses all braking means available and on ideal adhesion conditions, will be stopping at a braking distance of three hundred metres. Everybody should think over if these few minutes spared in this way are really so important", says Mr. Pavel Surý, Director General of SŽDC.

On selected sections where people cross track most of all, SŽDC in cooperation with the Czech Police carry out regular checks which should have a mostly preventive effect. *"Upon thorough training by SŽDC employees, our patrols carry out checks of railway stations and their surroundings as well as the vicinity of railway lines. They focus especially on localities with prohibited entry for the public and may be dangerous to visitors",* said Col. Vladislav Husák, Regional Police Director of the Liberec Region.

The preventive safety event of this year includes not only monitoring movements of reckless pedestrians in the trackage but also controls of railway crossings' observance by drivers. The extent of valid laws' infringement can be demonstrated by available statistics as well as by the amount of awarded fines. Only during the first three months of this year, policemen awarded 85 administration and transport fines for an amount of almost forty thousand Czech crowns. Most transgressions were dealt with in 2015 – 188 in total with fines for an amount of almost ninety thousand Czech crowns. This also demonstrates that continuous attention must be paid to this problem.

Transport accidents on the railway in 2011 – 2015	
Year	Accidents in Liberec Region
2011	23
2012	30
2013	14
2014	14
2015	18
1 – 3/2016	4

Although the number of collisions and fatalities at railway crossings in the whole Czech Republic decreased from year to year (in 2014 there were 173 collisions of road cars with trains at railway crossings and 42 fatalities, in 2015 there were 154 collisions and 32 fatalities), the occurrence of these accidents is still unnecessarily high. *In the vast majority, the accidents were unambiguously caused by law infringement of road car drivers or pedestrians.* From the railway point of view, no dangerous railway crossings exist, 99% of all accidents are caused by drivers. All crossings are safeguarded and correspond to current laws and standards in force. We must be aware that even the best safeguarding cannot serve its purpose if pedestrians and drivers do not observe principal laws and regulations in force.

This was also demonstrated by the all-day event's results. Approximately ninety policemen involved in preventive measures checked almost two hundred persons, a same number of vehicles as well as five dozens of railway buildings and installations and their surroundings. Seventy people committed transgressions against valid laws, namely the Act on Rail systems. Most often people entered places where public entry is prohibited. 36 transgressors paid a fine on the spot amounting more than ten thousand Czech crowns in total; the remaining transgressions were reported to administration authorities.

Fines were awarded not only to reckless pedestrians and passengers but also to drivers infringing general law provisions on running at railway crossings. Fines were awarded for not observing traffic signs, e.g. „STOP“. From two hundred drivers under check, 34 committed transgressions and upon their evaluation and documentation, more than a dozen of these transgressions were reported to the respective administration authority.

„The railway superstructure is a dangerous place in general where many accidents and collisions occur with fatal consequences“, mentioned Col. Vladislav Husák. „The only way to mitigate or prevent these frequently tragic events is to focus together not only on localities with higher risks but especially on reckless passengers and drivers gambling with their lives. As this preventive safety event demonstrated, there are reasons to prepare more of them“.

Every year, SŽDC invests hundreds of millions of Czech crowns into safety increase at railway crossings. Just for an example, 276 crossings will be modernised from 2013 to the end of 2016 for a total price of CZK 2.3 billion. It also organises preventive events every year which should warn of risky behaviour at railway crossings. SŽDC also runs a special thematic website focused on railway crossings: <http://www.szdc.cz/web/prejezdy.html>

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