

## Safety and Security

The Alaska Railroad (ARRC) engages employees, customers and business partners in a **Safe Zone**, where we deliver and receive services in the safest manner possible. ARRC upholds safety as a fundamental value. Keeping each other safe is the responsibility of each employee at every level. Toward that end, employees are expected to be aware of their surroundings and to act immediately to eliminate unsafe conditions and to prevent the risk of injury in the workplace. Maintaining a **Safe Zone** means:

- Embracing a culture that makes safety a top priority, and that is open to self-assessment and employee engagement.
- Fostering a work environment where all known safety and environmental hazards are reported and eliminated or safeguarded.
- Training and educating our workforce to take responsibility for environmental integrity, their personal safety, the safety of fellow employees, and the communities we serve.
- Complying with all federal, state, local and company rules and regulations.
- Emphasizing mutual respect, cooperation and equal opportunity.

### Operation Lifesaver

Operation Lifesaver (OL) is a non-profit public education program that uses a nationwide network of volunteers to educate people about rail safety. Established in 1972, Operation Lifesaver's mission supports state programs, educational brochures and videos, instructional information and other materials for audiences of all ages to prevent collisions, deaths

and injuries at places where roadways cross train tracks and on railroad rights-of-way (ROW).

With state coordinators in all 50 states, OL programs are sponsored cooperatively by federal, state and local government agencies; highway safety organizations and railroads. In Alaska, ARRC sponsors OL activities and an ARRC employee volunteers as Alaska's OL state coordinator. ARRC supports efforts to re-organize and expand OL educational programs along the Alaska railbelt to include cooperative ventures with public safety and school organizations. In recent years, ARRC has teamed up with OL to conduct public safety campaigns. The 2013 campaign took advantage of a national OL grant that helped to fund a \$26,000 *Summer Rail Safety Campaign*. Since then, annual public safety campaigns funded entirely by ARRC begin early summer and last into late fall. Through traditional advertising, media relations and social media avenues, annual public track safety campaigns continue to echo the recently updated OL message "See Tracks? Think Train."

### TrackWatch Program

ARRC, in cooperation with the Transportation Security Administration, promotes *TrackWatch*, a public awareness and education campaign. The *TrackWatch* program asks Alaska Railroad neighbors, employees, customers and passengers to report suspicious activity around railroad tracks and property, or situations that could pose a danger to railroad operations. The program is patterned after the successful *Neighborhood Watch* program initiated in communities across the country. ARRC has created an information card



to help employees and neighbors to become involved in this safety and security partnership. Passengers contribute to the security equation by providing thousands of extra eyes and ears while at our depots or onboard our trains. In short, *TrackWatch* fosters a first line of defense against natural or man-made disasters.

## Vegetation Control

Vegetation control is required by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), the agency responsible for regulating U.S. railroad safety. Vegetation management is necessary to ensure the track is visible for safety inspections, to remove obstructions that block line-of-sight or obscure signs and signals; to reduce tripping hazards, and to prevent accelerated deterioration of the track and track bed. Mechanical and manual vegetation control methods alone have not been sufficient to meet FRA and safety requirements. For this reason, from 2009 to 2012, ARRC applied for and received Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) permits to integrate herbicide weed control into our vegetation management program. Since 2013, ARRC has followed ADEC regulations requiring an integrated vegetation management plan and public notice when using herbicides along the rail system. ARRC hires a railroad vegetation control expert to use specialized equipment with low-volume, low-pressure, ground-directed application to target only the track bed and operating yards. ARRC avoids application in waterways.

## Right-of-Way Protection

The primary purpose of the railroad ROW is to operate trains; it is intended to provide maximum public protection from safety risks inherent in railroad operations. With increasing train speeds and volumes, particularly in areas with higher population density, it is increasingly important to maintain a clear ROW. State law also requires the ROW to be preserved for transportation, communication and transmission purposes, including underground and overhead utilities. ARRC will continue to strictly evaluate the suitability and safety of activities allowed in the ROW by permit. The time may come when the FRA mandates – or safety concerns dictate – fencing the ROW to provide greater train operations and public safety.

In the meantime, ARRC has taken proactive steps to increase boundary visibility and promote public awareness of the

ROW as a railroad utility and safety corridor. In 2011, ARRC delineated (marked) the ROW boundary through Anchorage, from Potter to Elmendorf, by installing durable 6-foot blue posts every 200 feet to physically indicate the boundary through the area. Delineation augments the U.S. Survey monuments that currently mark the ROW boundary. ARRC will consider ROW delineation in other areas of dense population as appropriate.

## Trails in ARRC Right-of-Way

In general, a railroad ROW is not a safe or appropriate location for a trail. However, ARRC may consider use of ROW for trails in rare instances where no feasible alternatives exist. The railroad also recognizes the role trail access plays in some rural areas. Because any trail within the ROW would expose the public to substantial risk, and ARRC to substantial liability, such trails must be constructed to specifically mitigate these risks. By state statute, trails on ARRC land must not negatively impact railroad operations, they must be maintained and insured by an entity other than ARRC, and that entity must agree to indemnify ARRC for all related claims. All trails must be approved by the ARRC Board of Directors, which has full and final discretion over trail requests. Within those restrictions, ARRC can sometimes accommodate portions of a trail in the outer 30 feet of ROW if the trail is properly planned. The railroad encourages municipal planners to include ARRC at the earliest stages of trail planning.

## Avalanche Mitigation

ARRC has made significant investments in equipment, state-of-the-art technology, research and expertise to mitigate avalanche risk, particularly along slide-prone areas between Anchorage and Seward. The railroad has worked with the Alaska Department of Transportation, U.S. Forest Service, Weather Service and other public safety organizations to reduce uncertainty and hazardous conditions. Efforts

include: **1)** data acquisition upgrades (weather stations, avalanche detection equipment, and avalanche data management computer systems, etc.); **2)** explosive delivery systems to facilitate controlled slides (howitzer sites and hyrail equipment, etc.); and **3)** snow-clearing equipment. The investments have improved safety for people traveling by rail and by highway.



**A Howitzer gun triggers a controlled slide.**