

Trespass and Suicide Prevention through Education

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RAIL

MOVING AMERICA FORWARD

Trespassing and Suicide Prevention Through Education

DuPage Railroad Safety Council

Prevent Tragedy on the Tracks 2022 Conference

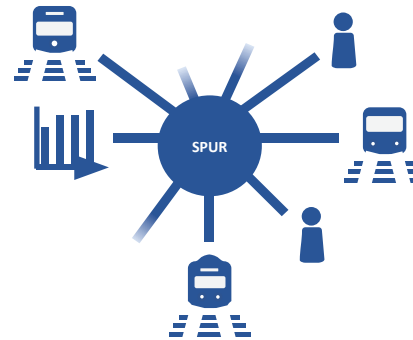
Trespassing and Suicide Prevention

- Driven by a variety of risk factors, many out of a railroad's control
- Understanding motivation for trespassing is critical to inform prevention strategies
- Prevention likely requires a multi-faceted approach
- Education is one component of such a strategy



Trespassing and Suicide Prevention: Education

- Consider both trespassing and suicide in rail safety education
- Coordinate with international community
- Collaborate with peer railroads to share lessons learned
- Consolidate knowledge and best practices for industry stakeholders



Coordination with Operation Lifesaver

- FRA, through Volpe, has a long-standing relationship with OLI
- Volpe coordinated with OLI to develop a guide for messaging about rail incidents
- Volpe also works with OLI to provide subject matter expertise related to suicide prevention to OLI task forces

SAFE AND EFFECTIVE MESSAGING ON RAIL INCIDENTS

Useful Tips for Effective Reporting on Rail Suicide

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT
Irresponsible reporting and messaging following a suicide death may result in 'copycat' suicide attempts, also referred to as suicide contagion. This phenomenon, known as the Werther Effect, is known to contribute to elevated suicide rates (see [WHO/MSD/MER/17.5](#) from the World Health Organization). This effect has been demonstrated for many methods of suicide, including those that occur on the railway system. Details that are associated with increased risk of contagion may seem critical to the story and are thus included (e.g., the exact location of the incident). However, there are ways to inform the public while still ensuring that the information being communicated is done in a way that reduces the likelihood of imitation by other vulnerable individuals.

The media can also be a tremendous resource for those at risk by encouraging vulnerable individuals to seek help, changing public perceptions, and correcting myths about mental health and suicide. Media can inspire hope and provide resources to those at risk for suicide. By being informed on best practices, the media can play a positive role in suicide prevention.

CONCEPTS THAT INCREASE CONTAGION

PERCEIVING SUICIDE AS COMMON
Including "suicide" in the headline of an article or using language that exaggerates rates of suicide (e.g., "epidemic," "skyrocketing") has the potential to mislead the public into thinking suicide is more common than it actually is, and therefore is a common response to life's struggles. Headlines are especially important as they allow information to quickly spread online and through social media to influence public perceptions.

IDENTIFYING WITH SOMEONE WHO HAS DIED BY SUICIDE
Elements of an article that glorify the deceased or provide personal details may prompt a vulnerable reader to identify with the deceased in a way that may make a similar path to suicide more approachable. Similarly, attributing a suicide death to a single cause (e.g., loss of job) oversimplifies the complexities of suicide in a way that might mislead the public or make existing thoughts of suicide more salient following similar life events.

VISUALIZING A PARTICULAR METHOD
Providing details about the location of a suicide or the actions of the deceased (e.g., jumped in front of a train) may prompt individuals already considering suicide to more clearly imagine the event happening, possibly leading them to identify with the specific method reported.

PROMOTING MYTHS THAT RAIL DEATH IS QUICK AND/OR CERTAIN
Emphasis on lethality or the convenience/accessibility of the rail system may be read as a confirmation that the rail system is a viable means for suicide. This idea can be reinforced with the use of terminology relating to instant or certain death when someone is struck by a train.

Resource for Writing about a Rail Trespass or Suicide Fatality

OFFER RESOURCES AND INSPIRE HOPE

MESSAGING OF HOPE
Consider crafting content that inspires hope and highlight individuals overcoming suicidal thoughts. These articles can help provide a counterpoint to more common reports of individuals dying by suicide. These types of stories have been shown to reduce suicide rates (referred to as the Papageno Effect, also discussed in [WHO/MSD/MER/17.5](#)).

WHEN REPORTING ABOUT A RAILWAY SUICIDE
There is always a choice about whether to discuss an incident as a suicide or simply as a fatality on the railway. If a decision is made to report on the incident as a suicide, consider offering helpful information or resources for vulnerable individuals who may read this story. Consider including information about warning signs for those at risk (e.g., see [www.afsp.org](#)) as well as resources where vulnerable individuals may seek help (see below).

Also consider the impact of the story on train crews. Train operators are powerless to quickly stop a train if a person is on the tracks. Language that implies fault, such as "train kills person", may add stress to an already challenging time in that train crew's life.

NATIONAL RESOURCES	LOCAL RESOURCES
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Free 24/7 Helpline 877-273-TALK (8255)	Crisis Text Line Free 24/7 support Text HOME to 741741
	Samaritans (Example) Free 24/7 Helpline Call or Text 877-439-HOPE (4673) Dial (local org's phone #) (or website address)

SPECIFIC REPORTING LANGUAGE: DOS AND DON'TS

INSTEAD OF...	CONSIDER...
X Local Man Commits Suicide at Broadway Station X Suicide on Springfield Line of General Railroad	✓ Local Man Died on Tuesday Afternoon ✓ Woman Trespassing on General Railroad Tracks Struck and Killed
X The death occurred after the man jumped from the south end of the platform as the train entered Broadway station. X She faced the train with her head looking up and her arms outstretched as the train struck and killed her.	✓ The man was struck and killed near Broadway Station. ✓ After trespassing onto the railroad tracks the woman was struck and killed by the train. ✓ It appears that the actions of the individual were intentional.
X Train kills person	✓ Person struck by train
X Images of memorials or grieving friends X Images of trains or train platforms	✓ School photo or work photo ✓ No photo or stock photos (e.g., caution tape)

Resource for Writing about a Rail Trespass or Suicide Fatality

Coordination with Operation Lifesaver

- De-emphasize lethality
- De-emphasize quick death
- Focus on expected behaviors when possible



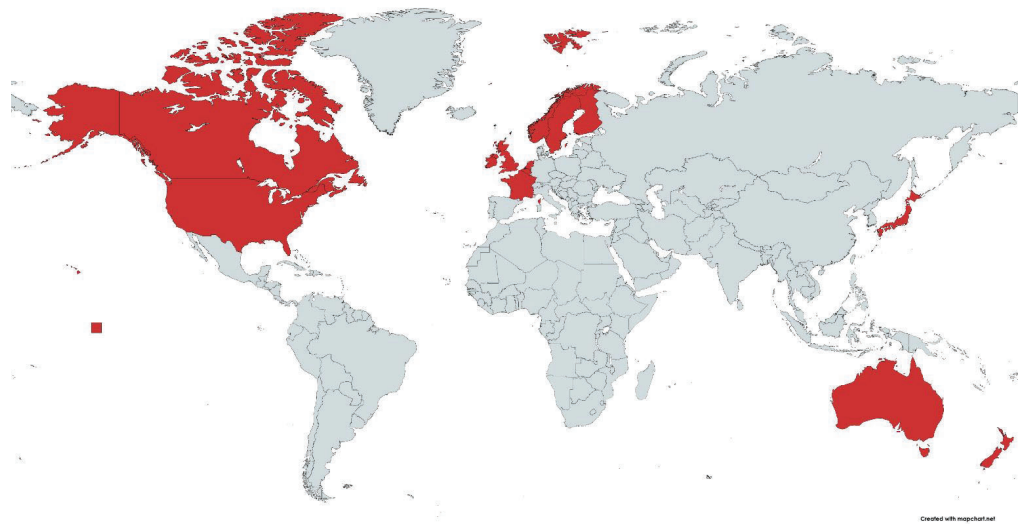
Global Railway Alliance for Suicide Prevention (GRASP)

- Founded in 2014 as a partnership between FRA, AAR, and Volpe
- We seek a way to share with one another and learn from others around the world



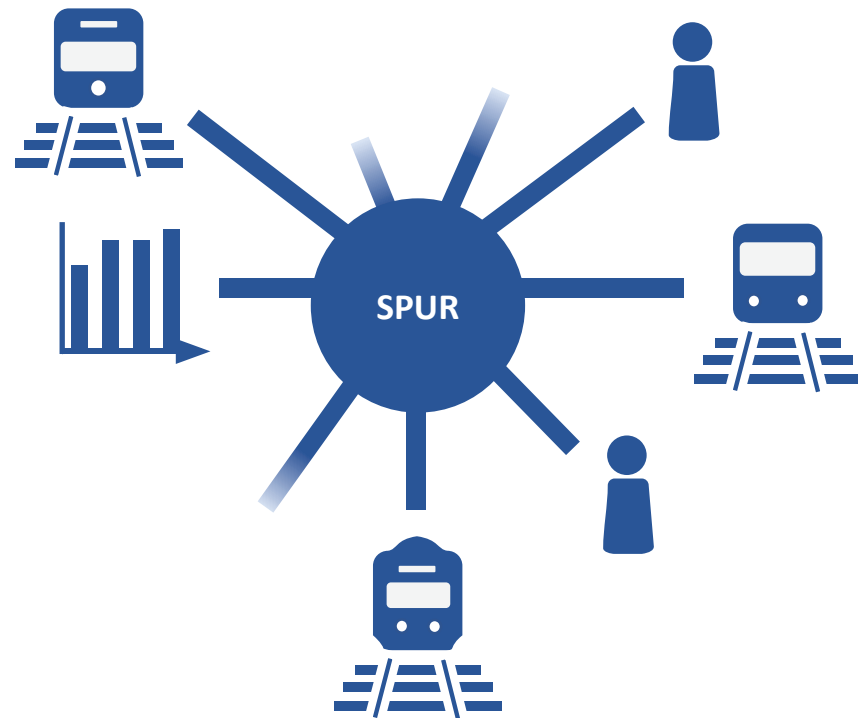
GRASP

- Participation from over 10 countries
- A way to gather information from international experts, but also to share best practices from the U.S. with international colleagues



Suicide Prevention for U.S. Rail (SPUR)

- Working group for commuter rail carriers to discuss rail suicide and trespass prevention
- Started in Fall 2021
- Quarterly meetings



Suicide Prevention for U.S. Rail (SPUR)

- First topic-focused meeting discussed programs to train employees to recognize warning signs for suicide (QPR Program)
- Upcoming meeting topics include:
 - Establishing effective partnerships with outside groups
 - Using advanced technologies to prevent trespass & suicide



Trespass and Suicide Prevention (TSP) Toolkit

- Identify relevant and effective strategies
- Consider improvements to your current practices
- Help identify partners
- Stay informed with up-to-date research to know which strategies may be the best fit for your situation

The screenshot displays the 'TRESPASS & SUICIDE PREVENTION TOOLKIT' website. On the left is a sidebar with a search bar labeled 'Custom Keyword' and a 'GO' button. Below the search bar are four filter sections: 'Incident Type' (with checkboxes for Trespass only (9), Suicide only (5), and Both trespass and suicide (28)), 'Location' (with checkboxes for Station only (8), Right-of-Way only (4), and Both station and right-of-way (30)), 'Intervention Strategy' (with checkboxes for Data: Application and Planning (8), Education: Outreach and Messaging (13), Enforcement: Policy Development and Implementation (4), and Engineering: Technical and Physical Deterrents (17)), and 'Measure Group' (with checkboxes for Risk Assessment (5), Policy Enforcement (3), Collaboration, Training, and Education (8), Public Communication (6), Physical Barriers (7), Detection and Lighting (5), Infrastructure Modification (4), and Post-Incident Management (4)). The main content area on the right features a blue header with 'Risk Assessment' and a help icon. Below this header are five expandable cards: 'Identify access points for potential trespassers', 'Identify and monitor hotspots', 'Planning for events with increased traffic', 'Rail corridor risk assessment', and 'Risk assessment using forward facing CCTV'. Each card has a brief description and a plus icon to expand it. At the bottom of the main area is another blue header for 'Policy Enforcement', followed by two more expandable cards: 'Refuse or delay boarding to discourage trespassing' and 'Relocation of homeless individuals'.

<https://trespasstoolkit.fra.dot.gov/>

Trespass and Suicide Prevention (TSP) Toolkit

- Description
- Notable Practices
- Advantages
- Drawbacks
- Images
- References
- Related Measures

Anti-trespass panels ↗						
Material installed alongside and across the tracks that make footing unreliable in order to deter entry to the right-of-way.						
Description	Notable Practices	Advantages	Drawbacks	Images	References	Related Measures
<p>Anti-trespass panels are used to restrict access to the Right-Of-Way (ROW) from grade crossings and other potential entry points to the tracks. These panels are made from recycled rubber or timber and have a surface that is difficult to walk on. Panels can have a repetitive skewed profile or a raised pyramid design.</p> <p>Anti-trespass panels are most effective when combined with proper channelization to prevent people from walking around the panels. They can also be effective at tunnel or bridge locations where there is natural/infrastructure channelization. These panels are often found at the end of a platform to prevent people from using the railroad ROW as a shortcut or intentionally putting themselves in front of a train.</p> <p>Anti-trespass panels have helped reduce railroad trespasser activity, according to evaluations of panel effectiveness, including one evaluation in the United States. The U.S. study reports a 38-percent reduction in the number of trespassers following the installation of the anti-trespass panels at a crossing in Fayetteville, AR [1]. Other research studies conducted in Europe evaluate the effectiveness of anti-trespass panels in combination with other physical and behavioral measures. These studies reported between a 30- and 98-percent reduction in the number of trespassers following installation of the panels [2][3][4].</p> <p>Additional search terms: <i>deterrent, grids, pyramids</i></p>						

TSP Toolkit: Intervention Strategy

- Data
 - Understand the problem
- Engineering
 - Restrict access to right-of-way (ROW)
 - Detect access to ROW
- Education
 - Collaboration with partners
 - Educate staff/ridership
- Enforcement
 - Identify those at risk

TRESPASS & SUICIDE PREVENTION TOOLKIT

Custom Keyword **GO**

Incident Type

- ☐ Trespass only (9)
- ☐ Suicide only (5)
- ☐ Both trespass and suicide (28)

Location

- ☐ Station only (8)
- ☐ Right-of-Way only (4)
- ☐ Both station and right-of-way (30)

Intervention Strategy

- ☐ Data: Application and Planning (8)
- ☐ Education: Outreach and Messaging (13)
- ☐ Enforcement: Policy Development and Implementation (4)
- ☐ Engineering: Technical and Physical Deterrents (17)

Measure Group

- ☐ Risk Assessment (5)
- ☐ Policy Enforcement (3)
- ☐ Collaboration, Training, and Education (8)
- ☐ Public Communication (6)
- ☐ Physical Barriers (7)
- ☐ Detection and Lighting (5)
- ☐ Infrastructure Modification (4)
- ☐ Post-Incident Management (4)

Risk Assessment

- Identify access points for potential trespassers**
Identify access points where individuals are entering the track area to determine appropriate mitigations.
- Identify and monitor hotspots**
Identify and monitor locations where the number of trespass and/or suicide incidents are higher than expected.
- Planning for events with increased traffic**
Develop a plan to ensure safety when an increase in foot or vehicle traffic near the tracks is expected.
- Rail corridor risk assessment**
Identify locations along railroad corridors with the potential for increased trespass and/or suicide incidents based on characteristics of the surrounding communities.
- Risk assessment using forward facing CCTV**
Use FFCTV to review trespass, suicide, and close call incidents to better understand the actions of individuals in the moments before a strike or near miss.

Policy Enforcement

- Refuse or delay boarding to discourage trespassing**
Implement procedures to delay or deny boarding for passengers who are seen to trespass en route to board the train.
- Relocation of homeless individuals**

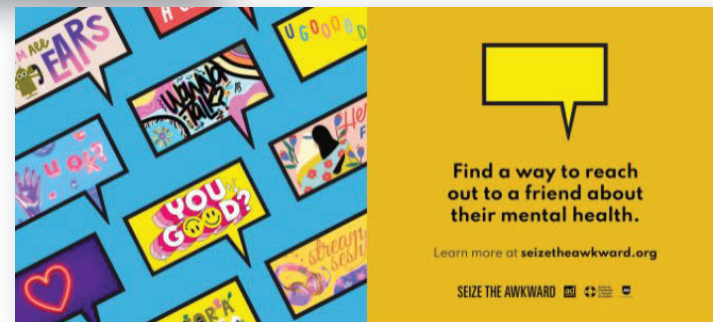
TSP Toolkit: Intervention Strategy

- Data
 - Understand the problem
- Engineering
 - Restrict access to ROW
 - Detect access to ROW
- Education
 - **Collaboration with partners**
 - Educate staff/ridership
- Enforcement
 - Identify those at risk



TSP Toolkit: Intervention Strategy

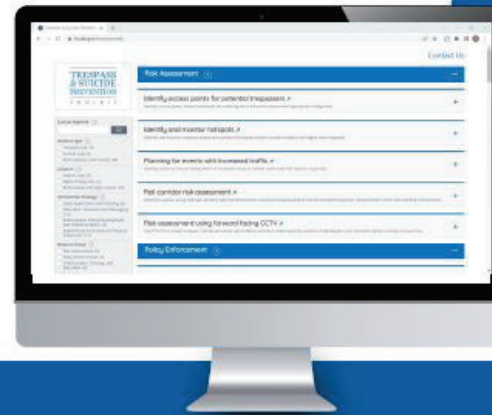
- Data
 - Understand the problem
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 - Restrict access to ROW
 - Detect access to ROW
- Education
 - Collaboration with partners
 - **Educate staff/ridership**
- Enforcement
 - Identify those at risk



Trespass and Suicide Prevention Toolkit

- Material to be updated with first major updating still to come
- Seeking input from users about how to make this tool most helpful

The Trespass and Suicide Prevention (TSP) Toolkit is a resource that can be used to identify effective measures to address trespassing and suicides on the nation's railroads.



TRESPASS & SUICIDE PREVENTION T O O L K I T

<https://trespasstoolkit.fra.dot.gov/>

Scan the QR code
or visit the link
above to explore
the TSP Toolkit.



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration

A dark blue silhouette image of a group of people sitting around a long table in a meeting room. The people are facing each other, and one person in the center is gesturing with their hands. The background shows vertical window frames.

QUESTIONS?

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