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For the second time in less than three months, Burleson's traffic officers had an eagle eye on Burleson's railroad crossings, ticketing 17 drivers for disregarding a railroad crossing signal.

Four Burleson traffic officers and several representatives from Union Pacific Railroad conducted a railroad crossing enforcement detail for three hours on October 9. During that time, the traffic officers stopped 23 vehicles. Twenty tickets were issued for moving violations. One ticket was written for a non-moving violation. One man was issued a disorderly conduct citation and another was stopped for unsafe lane change and creating noise with a racing motor.



On July 30, five traffic officers stopped 24 vehicles for disregarding a railroad crossing signal. Three verbal warnings were issued, 18 railroad crossing citations were written, two failure to maintain financial responsibility (no insurance) citations were issued, and one driver received a citation for not having a valid driver's license.

In July and in October, each driver was given a pamphlet explaining the enforcement detail.



Before the enforcement detail began, Union Pacific and Burleson traffic officers gave an impromptu presentation to students from Ann Brock Elementary who walked over to the tracks from their campus. Thanks to the traffic officers, each child went home with a pamphlet for their parents that detailed the railroad crossing enforcement.

Burleson lost two teenagers in two separate railroad crossing accidents in the late 1980s.

Of the 539 grade crossing collisions across the nation in 2007 that occurred on Union Pacific systems, 82 were fatal. Sixty-eight percent of those collisions occurred between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. In 70 percent of the cases, the train was going less than 30 miles per hour.

The maximum speed for trains traveling through Burleson is 60 miles an hour. Burleson has six grade crossings.

Fifty-two percent of the grade crossing collisions that resulted in fatalities occurred at crossings with active warning devices. Forty-four percent of those involved in the 539 collisions did not stop, 21 percent drove around the gates, and 11 percent stopped, then drove into the path of the train. Sixty-four percent of those killed were drivers between the ages of 20 and 49.

Drivers must yield when the railroad crossings' signal lights flash red. If the railroad crossing arms are down OR the warning lights are flashing, drivers may not cross the tracks. Drivers must stop and wait for the gates to go up and the warning lights to stop flashing before they can safely proceed over the tracks.

It usually takes a train a mile or more to come to a full stop. According to the pamphlet, it is nearly impossible to accurately judge the distance and speed of an oncoming train. At crossings that have adjacent tracks (Renfro Street), a train may be approaching from the other direction, so don't cross unless both tracks are clear. And, never stop on the tracks. Be sure you can clear the tracks by at least three feet on both sides. Drivers must stop prior to the white stop bar painted on the pavement.

Burleson is not the only agency involved in the railroad crossing enforcement. In calendar year 2007, according to Union Pacific statistics, 5,779 citations were issued and 1,520 drivers were warned for grade crossing violations. In that same year, 36,832 trespassers were contacted and either issued a verbal warning or citation.

For more information, call the public information office at 817-447-5400, ext. 286.