# Network Rail releases footage of near misses caused by mobile phone distractions on UK railways



Shocking and unsettling footage has been released by Network Rail, revealing numerous near-miss incidents on UK railway lines where individuals—many of them young—have risked their lives while being distracted by their mobile phones. The video captures moments of acute danger, including a teenage boy standing on train tracks immersed in his phone just moments before a train zooms past, a young father crossing tracks with two children while distracted by his device, and a cyclist who narrowly escapes being struck by an oncoming train.

These incidents highlight a growing concern regarding distractions caused by mobile devices, particularly among younger generations. New research indicates that Generation Z, those born between 1997 and 2012, and Millennials, born from 1981 to 1996, are the most vulnerable to accidents linked to mobile phone distractions. Nearly half of people surveyed (47%) admitted to having made mistakes due to phone distraction, with 87% of Generation Z and 70% of Millennials reporting phone-related mishaps. By contrast, only 7% of Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, reported similar experiences. Generation Z individuals are reportedly six times more likely to have accidents due to phone distractions than older age groups.

Over the past four years, Network Rail has recorded 1,574 near-miss incidents involving pedestrians at level crossings, with a noticeable 16% increase in incidents between April and May annually. Many of the incidents captured on CCTV footage reveal people crossing level crossings despite signals and barriers, engaging in risky behaviour such as running across tracks while pushing pushchairs or walking dogs, all while distracted by smartphones or engaging in conversations.

One powerful testimony comes from Lucy Ruck, now 49, who was severely injured in 1992 after being struck by a high-speed train at Farnborough North level crossing. At 17, she was waiting at the crossing when others ignored the red signal and crossed the tracks. Lucy followed the crowd, unaware that a train was approaching from the opposite direction at 65mph. She was hit so forcefully that her leg was found half a mile down the track. Reflecting on the incident, she told the Daily Mail, "The consequences of a split-second decision can be life-altering. I know this all too well from my own accident... I wasn’t being deliberately reckless or rushing, but perhaps because I used the station every day and knew it so well, I’d become a bit complacent... Always look carefully and never assume it’s safe to cross."

The research also reveals that over 40% of people feel more cautious when crossing roads than railway level crossings, suggesting an awareness gap regarding the risks involved in crossing train tracks.

Thomas Desmond, Operations Director at Network Rail, commented, "Whether it’s glancing at a phone or simply assuming the track is clear, these lapses in concentration can be fatal. We urge everyone to stop, look, listen and obey the signals every single time. Waiting a few minutes is infinitely better than risking everything."

Experts also weigh in on the dangers of distracted behaviour near railways. Gemma Briggs, a Professor of Applied Cognitive Psychology at the Open University, explains, "While you may feel able to multitask when using your phone, research shows you can fail to notice important events and hazards which happen right in front of you. You don’t notice them because your mind is on your phone, and your attention is spread too thinly. This ‘inattentional blindness’ is particularly problematic in safety critical situations such as at level crossings. The best course of action is to put your phone away and focus your full attention on crossing safely."

The data and footage released by Network Rail come as a stark reminder of the increasing risks pedestrians face on and around railway lines, exacerbated by the distraction caused by mobile phones. Despite the clear dangers and the presence of signals and barriers, risky behaviours continue, raising ongoing safety concerns for people of all ages in the UK.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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