

**Measure Name** Training to identify and assist those at risk for suicide and trespassing

**Definition** Training for rail staff, local law enforcement, rail police, or volunteers to recognize individuals at risk for suicide and/or trespassing, and to take appropriate action.

**Tags**

<b>Incident Type</b>	Both trespass and suicide
<b>Location</b>	Both station and right-of-way
<b>Intervention Strategy</b>	Education: outreach and messaging
<b>Measure Group</b>	Collaboration, training, and education

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## Description

Training can help to prevent both trespassing and suicide incidents, and a different approach is needed to target each of these groups. Suicide intervention training can empower rail employees to know how to identify suicide warning signs in others and intervene. In the rail environment, warning signs may include the individual waiting for many trains to pass through without boarding, leaving possessions behind on the platform, or isolating oneself near the end of a platform away from others [1]. After identifying an individual in need, staff can appropriately and effectively intervene.

Training programs are not one size fits all, and rail carriers should tailor the training to fit their needs and limitations. Most training programs include a process for identifying warning signs, intervening with that individual, moving them away from the track area to a safe space, and then referring that individual to relevant resources. This process has the potential to stop suicide attempts at that moment and prevent future attempts by directing individuals to support services.

Rail employees who received training reported greater confidence in their abilities to effectively respond to an individual in need [2], increased skills and knowledge about rail suicide and response [3], and improvements in their abilities to cope following an incident [4].

Training programs can also include information about how to identify individuals engaged in unsafe activity on the tracks and intervene. Trespassing without suicidal intent may occur for a variety of reasons. Some individuals may be aware of the illegality or dangers of their actions, while others may not know. In addition, some people may wrongly believe that the tracks are not active. Some reasons for trespassing include:

- Seeking shortcuts, such as crossing tracks to get from a residential area to a shopping center.
- Engaging in fitness activities along the tracks.
- Using the tracks for photography or videography sessions.
- People engaged in thrill seeking.
- Vandalism or other criminal activity on rail property.

Training programs can be tailored to suit a variety of individuals. For example, volunteers who are unfamiliar with the dangers of trespassing or general railroad safety may benefit from comprehensive training. Rail employees are probably familiar with trespassing behavior, but they may still benefit from training on what to do if they encounter trespassers. For more detailed information on public

documents available for use as a guide in developing employee training, refer to reference five (i.e., Warner et al., 2022) [5].

Training opportunities that educate about trespassing and suicide may also afford an opportunity to educate about how to identify potential human trafficking victims. The Department of Transportation (DOT) provides a variety of [resources](#) for how to identify and address potential human trafficking situations. The US DOT, in coordination with the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has published [indicators of human trafficking](#) that are specifically designed for railroad staff. This resource offers guidance about identifying an individual who may be a victim of human trafficking and what to do and who to contact if such a situation is identified.

Additional search terms: *behaviors, educate, human trafficking, intervene, workshop*

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## Advantages

- Training can help to prevent both trespassing and suicide incidents. Training could also include the identification of other high-risk situations, such as human trafficking or domestic violence.
  - Training staff to identify risk and intervene addresses rail suicide in two ways: 1) it addresses immediate risk by identifying an individual contemplating suicide in the rail environment and seeks to make direct contact with that person; 2) it addresses longer-term risk by directing that individual towards resources to help address underlying issues associated with suicide risk.
  - Suicide intervention training can involve coordination with individual suicide prevention professionals and groups. These partnerships may also lead to the development of other collaborative efforts such as training to help crews manage stress after traumatic incidents and public messaging campaigns about suicide prevention.
  - Lessons learned in suicide intervention training can be applied in other settings outside of the workplace. Furthermore, this training may help foster an environment where employees feel safe and supported by each other and by management.
  - Creating an in-house training program with existing staff (e.g., through a train-the-trainer program) may be lower cost over the long term.
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## Drawbacks

- Staff may need to take time away from their regular duties to attend training. Limited class sizes and a slow roll out of the program may increase cost and delay the initial benefits of the training.
  - As with any effort to train numerous employees, this type of program will take time to roll out. The exact timeline will depend on many factors, including class size and employee population being trained.
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## Notable Practices

- Training approaches can vary. For example, a “train-the-trainer” approach is one in which a smaller number of rail employees learn how to train rail staff. In other approaches, training is directly provided to all staff by professionals outside of the rail organization.
  - The length of training may vary for suicide intervention programs. Many require at least two hours, and the most robust programs offer a full day of training. Most carriers who have implemented such programs suggest that class sizes should also be relatively small, between 8 and 20 employees [1].
  - Make sure that the employees scheduling the training program are experienced and knowledgeable about staff and rostering. This will help to avoid any issues with staffing levels during training [1].
  - Try to understand any beliefs and myths about suicide that may prevent employees from believing that this program can work. Training should address these issues [1].
  - If possible, conduct suicide intervention training in-person, as it provides an opportunity to practice the skills learned face-to-face.
  - Make sure that there is a qualified professional at the suicide intervention training who can help employees if they become distressed [1].
  - Highlight how the skills learned in suicide intervention training are useful in both professional and personal settings [1].
  - Make clear to staff that this training aims to prepare them to handle challenging situations they are likely to encounter, and not to burden them with additional responsibility [2].
  - Include information about post-incident employee care during training, as this topic will likely raise concerns or questions from employees.
  - Provide trainees with materials after the training is complete so that they can refer to them later.
  - Log relevant information that can help to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of the training program. For example, track who has been trained and when. Conduct post-course evaluations both immediately after the training as well as at a later date to assess the impact of the training. Record employee feedback about the training and track interventions made by employees. This information can also help employees understand the impact that their efforts are having [1].
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## References

[1] Gabree, S. and Hiltunen, D. (2019). [Review of Suicide Intervention Training Programs](#). Technical Report No. DOT/FRA/ORD-19/31. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Railroad Administration.

Abstract: Rail carrier-based strategies to prevent [suicide] are not well understood, and empirical evidence of the effectiveness of known strategies is currently very limited. One such strategy is

suicide intervention training to educate rail staff about how to recognize individuals who may be a near-term risk of suicide and how to intervene. This report documents best practices and lessons learned, first through a review of several established suicide intervention training programs, and second through a summary of the basics of how such a program may be developed by other carriers. Rail carriers looking to implement a suicide intervention training program will be able to see how other successful efforts were launched, and will find guidance on important decisions they will need to make when launching their own training programs.

[2] Sherry, P. (2016). [\*Remedial Actions to Prevent Suicides on Commuter and Metro Rail Systems\*](#) (No. CA-MTI-14-1129). Washington, DC: National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, Transportation Research Board.

Abstract: The present study reviewed current efforts of commuter railroads to reduce or prevent suicide on railways and discussed preventative activities affecting rail related suicides. [...]

The present study also sought to provide information about community awareness and attitudes toward suicide on the railroads and survey data collected from 498 respondents demonstrate that community members feel a strong sense of responsibility for assisting those who are suicidal. However, survey data also revealed a lower sense of self-confidence in knowing what to do to be helpful.

Pre-post surveys of railroad personnel involved in workplace suicide prevention training programs examined the effects of an employee training program with a large commuter railroad designed to identify and prevent rail related suicide. Results demonstrated that people who completed training obtained higher levels of self-efficacy with respect to understanding, identifying, and assisting people who appeared to be at risk for suicide. Program participants also demonstrated knowledge of the signs and symptoms and risk factors for suicide. [...]

[For intervention training discussion see pages 36 – 49]

[3] Colliard, J. (2014). [\*Evaluation of measures, recommendations and guidelines for further implementation. Pilot test #8, Gatekeeper Programme – Helmholtz München German Research Centre for Environmental Health.\*](#)

Description: This report described a pilot test of an intervention training effort in Germany as part of the RESTRAIL project.

[4] Colliard, J. (2014). [\*Evaluation of measures, recommendations and guidelines for further implementation. Pilot test #9, Gatekeeper Programme -- ProRail.\*](#)

Description: This report described a pilot test of an intervention training effort in the Netherlands as part of the RESTRAIL project.

[5] Warner, J. E., Lee, D., Trueblood, A. B., Cline, J. C., Johnson, N. A., & Christjoy, A. (2022). [\*Strategies for deterring trespassing on rail transit and commuter rail rights-of-way, volume 1: Guidebook.\*](#) Washington, D.C: *The National Academies Press.*

Objective: This guidebook is intended to provide information on strategies to deter trespassing on rail transit and commuter rail exclusive and semi-exclusive rights-of-way, including within station areas outside designated pedestrian crossings. In general, trespassing is accessing rail transit and commuter rail restricted areas without permission or proper authorization, intentionally or unintentionally. The guidebook documents the extent of trespassing in the United States; existing decision-making guidance that agencies can utilize; causes,

consequences, and risks associated with trespassing; mitigation countermeasures to reduce trespassing risks; and tools that agencies can utilize to identify possible mitigation strategies for a particular trespassing problem or concern.

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## Additional Resources

Niederkröthaler, T., Sonneck, G., Dervic, K., Nader, I. W., Voracek, M., Kapusta, N. D., ... & Dorner, T. (2012). [Predictors of suicide and suicide attempt in subway stations: a population-based ecological study](#). *Journal of Urban Health*, 89(2), 339-353.

Abstract: Suicidal behavior on the subway often involves young people and has a considerable impact on public life, but little is known about factors associated with suicides and suicide attempts in specific subway stations. Between 1979 and 2009, 185 suicides and 107 suicide attempts occurred on the subway in Vienna, Austria. Station-specific suicide and suicide attempt rates (defined as the frequency of suicidal incidents per time period) were modeled as the outcome variables in bivariate and multivariate Poisson regression models. Structural station characteristics (presence of a surveillance unit, train types used, and construction on street level versus other construction), contextual station characteristics (neighborhood to historical sites, size of the catchment area, and in operation during time period of extensive media reporting on subway suicides), and passenger-based characteristics (number of passengers getting on the trains per day, use as meeting point by drug users, and socioeconomic status of the population in the catchment area) were used as the explanatory variables. In the multivariate analyses, subway suicides increased when stations were served by the faster train type. Subway suicide attempts increased with the daily number of passengers getting on the trains and with the stations' use as meeting points by drug users. The findings indicate that there are some differences between subway suicides and suicide attempts. Completed suicides seem to vary most with train type used. Suicide attempts seem to depend mostly on passenger-based characteristics, specifically on the station's crowdedness and on its use as meeting point by drug users. Suicide-preventive interventions should concentrate on crowded stations and on stations frequented by risk groups.

### [The Rail Suicide Prevention](#) website

Description: A suicide prevention group based in the United Kingdom shares information about their efforts through this website (login required) and provides insight into what a training program like this might include.

### [US DOT Counter Trafficking Resources](#)

Description: This webpage includes a variety of materials for training, public awareness, and other materials to stop human trafficking.

### [Department of Homeland Security Human Trafficking Response Guide for Transportation](#)

Description: A resource to help transportation employees identify potential victims of human trafficking and what they should do if they identify such a situation.

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## Related Measures

- Collaboration with suicide prevention groups
- Identify and monitor hotspots
- Identify funding opportunities
- Incident cost estimation

## Training to identify and assist those at risk for suicide and trespassing

- Passenger engagement to identify customers at risk
- Safety patrols to deter suicide and trespassing