

<u>Measure Name</u>	Public messaging to prevent suicide
<u>Definition</u>	Messages to prevent suicide in the rail environment.
<u>Tags</u>	
<i>Incident Type</i>	Suicide only
<i>Location</i>	Both station and right-of-way
<i>Intervention Strategy</i>	Education: outreach and messaging
<i>Measure Group</i>	Public communication

Description

This measure aims to address suicidal ideation by raising awareness and encouraging individuals to seek help for themselves or others. Public messaging often includes a helpline number to call and/or text, website information, and a supportive message of hope. Various types of media to convey this information include:

- Posters and digital billboards
- TV, radio, or podcasts
- Web sites and social media platforms
- Newspapers, brochures

Public messaging campaigns to prevent suicide may also involve partnering with suicide prevention groups at the local, state, or national level, including: 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA); Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC). Many of these groups provide free online resources. Numerous rail carriers in the United States have implemented public messaging to prevent suicide in collaboration with these groups [1]. In some cases, rail carriers have also partnered with local organizations, such as rotary clubs, that provided funding for the signage installed by the rail carrier [1]. Another consideration is to use Hope Poles, which use motion-activated lights, powered by solar panels, to illuminate helpline signage to trespassers. Placing Hope Poles along the right-of-way can offer suicide prevention care information to the individuals that trespassed onto the right-of-way [2].

Additional search terms: *media, messages, signage, signs*

Advantages

- The cost associated with this type of collaboration will depend on the types of media used for the messaging (e.g., posters or training).
- Messaging may reach a large segment of the public because it can be implemented along the right-of-way, at stations, and outside of the rail environment.
- Suicidal individuals, or those who may become suicidal, are put in touch with the help they need. This potentially reduces the number of individuals who may seek out the rail system as a means in the future.

- One study showed that suicide prevention messaging can increase help-seeking behaviors for oneself and others, including increased calls to the promoted helpline. [3]
 - Increased visibility of suicide prevention groups and services may lead to increased interest from volunteers.
 - Collaboration with suicide prevention groups may help to strengthen public perceptions of the railroad as a community leader in suicide prevention, and to change ambivalent or negative attitudes about rail suicide prevention [4].
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Drawbacks

- This type of messaging addresses only suicide, not trespass.
 - Signage may require periodic maintenance.
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Notable Practices

- Focus messaging on seeking help, supporting those in need, and suicide prevention generally, and avoid directly addressing rail as a specific method [5].
 - If partnering with a local, state, or national organization, consider using common messaging in the rail environment that is also used elsewhere (e.g., on billboards or other public postings).
 - Decide whether the campaign will target a specific vulnerable population (e.g., through data analysis), and tailor the campaign to the intended audience.
 - The types of media used, and messaging should consider the ethnicities, languages, and ability status represented in the local population.
 - A documented communication strategy regarding partnerships and activities can help keep all relevant parties informed, including rail staff [4].
 - Consider placing messaging in high-traffic locations or where suicide attempts have occurred in the past.
 - Consider collaborating with suicide prevention groups to assess how the messaging affects the use of suicide prevention services. This can be helpful in evaluating the potential effectiveness of this measure when combined with tracking the frequency of rail suicide incidents.
 - When considering installing Hope Poles, agencies should think about the maintenance and placement of these poles and to insure the correct corresponding suicide prevention care information to get help. As available services and associated contact information change, signage needs to be updated to reflect current information [2].
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References

[1] Gabree, S. H., Hiltunen, D., & Ranalli, E. (2019). [*Railroad Implemented Countermeasures to Prevent Suicide: Review of Public Information*](#). (No. DOT/FRA/ORD-19/04). Washington, DC: Federal Railroad Administration.

Abstract: The public discussion of railroad safety initiatives can help to improve safety, either directly with the public through an increased awareness, or by encouraging other carriers to consider similar safety efforts. Rail carriers are often quick to promote trespass and crossing safety efforts, however, efforts to mitigate rail suicide are often not discussed. Suicide is unique from other rail safety topics in that it requires more precise language when discussing publicly. Responsible discussion of suicide prevention can increase the availability of information on how to get help, while limiting the dramatization of these events, thereby reducing the likelihood of copycat events. In this report, the authors conducted web-based searches to identify rail-specific efforts to mitigate suicide that have been publicly discussed, either by the carrier themselves or through the media. Generally, there is limited discussion of suicide-specific prevention efforts being undertaken by rail carriers, and the level of detail provided about these efforts varies. In total, 14 carriers and a range of strategies were identified including fencing, signage, detection and monitoring, training of employees and authorities, public and industry events, websites, and media guidelines. Partnerships with suicide prevention groups, both local and national, were most often discussed.

[2] 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.

[3] Too, L. S., Ross, A., Pirkis, J., Reavley, N., & Reifels, L. (2020). The Impact of the “Pause. Call. Be Heard” Campaign on Help-Seeking and Suicidal Behaviors Within Rail Environment in Victoria, Australia. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 50(2), 490-501.

Abstract: Objective: To assess the impact of the “Pause. Call. Be Heard” campaign on helpseeking and suicidal behaviors within rail environment in Victoria, Australia. Methods: An anonymous online survey was conducted to measure noticeability of and engagement with the campaign and help-seeking intentions and behaviors among rail commuters at 10 rail stations. We generated descriptive statistics to report these data and used logistic regression models to examine the association between campaign-related factors and help-seeking. Changes in Lifeline crisis calls and rail suicide behaviors from precampaign to campaign periods were examined using proportion tests. Results: About 25% of rail commuters noticed the campaign and rated the materials as “moderately noticeable.” Over half of these individuals correctly identified the campaign intentions and 75% engaged with the materials. Approximately 80% indicated that the materials increased their help-seeking intentions and about half indicated that they had engaged with help-seeking and/or self-caring behaviors. Engaging with the campaign was positively associated with help-seeking. A significant increase in crisis calls but not in suicide-related calls, and a nonsignificant decrease in rail suicidal behaviors were found during the

campaign period. Conclusions: Continued implementation of the campaign is warranted as it showed some desirable effects on help-seeking among rail commuters.

[4] Rail Safety and Standards Board. (2014). *Network Rail/Samaritans Tackling Suicide on the Railways programme: Annual Report 2013 Annex E: Case studies of different elements of the programme*. London, England: Rail Safety and Standards Board.

Document Excerpt: These case studies combine data from other parts of the evaluation with additional data from the interviews with those directly involved in the programme activities. The case studies illustrate the complexity of delivering these activities across multiple organisations and locations, resulting in varying levels of success in implementation and outcomes. [See pp. 19-22]

[5] RESTRAIL. (2019, July 19). [17.1 Targeted campaign to prevent suicide](#). Restrail Toolbox.

Description: This webpage provides information on implementing targeted rail suicide prevention efforts in Europe, including recommendations, considerations for implementation, and relevant research results.

Additional Resources

Rail Safety and Standards Board. (2013). *Improving suicide prevention methods on the rail network in Great Britain Annual Report 2013*. London, England: Rail Safety and Standards Board.

Document Excerpt: This report is the final report on the initial evaluation of the Network Rail/Samaritans Tackling Suicide on the Railways Programme. The report consists of 1 main report summarising the overall findings from 8 different evaluation activities, which are reported in depth in 5 annexes to the main report. [See pp. 47-50]

[988 Media Resources](#)

Description: SAMHSA website that provides 988 messaging resources, including a toolkit, best practices and other materials.

Related Measures

- Collaboration with suicide prevention groups
- Identify funding opportunities
- Incident cost estimation
- Passenger engagement to identify customers at risk
- Physical barriers at bridges
- Public messaging to prevent trespassing
- Safety patrols to deter suicide and trespassing