

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

SESSION 1991

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HOUSE BILL 175  
Committee Substitute Favorable 3/7/91  
Senate Transportation Committee Substitute Adopted 6/13/91

Short Title: Operation Lifesaver 1991.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

February 27, 1991

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
2 AN ACT TO CONSOLIDATE, CLARIFY, AND IMPROVE THE STATUTES  
3 RELATING TO RAILROAD/MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY.

4 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

5 Section 1. Part 10 of Article 3 of Chapter 20 of the General Statutes is  
6 amended by adding five sections to read:

7 **"§ 20-142.1. Obedience to railroad signal.**

8 (a) Whenever any person driving a vehicle approaches a railroad grade  
9 crossing under any of the circumstances stated in this section, the driver of the vehicle  
10 shall stop within 50 feet, but not less than 15 feet from the nearest rail of the railroad  
11 and shall not proceed until he can do so safely. These requirements apply when:

- 12 (1) A clearly visible electrical or mechanical signal device gives  
13 warning of the immediate approach of a railroad train;
- 14 (2) A crossing gate is lowered or when a human flagman gives or  
15 continues to give a signal of the approach or passage of a  
16 railroad train;
- 17 (3) A railroad train approaching within approximately 1500 feet of  
18 the highway crossing emits a signal audible from that distance,  
19 and the railroad train is an immediate hazard because of its  
20 speed or nearness to the crossing; or
- 21 (4) An approaching railroad train is plainly visible and is in  
22 hazardous proximity to the crossing.

1           (b) No person shall drive any vehicle through, around, or under any crossing  
2 gate or barrier at a railroad crossing while the gate or barrier is closed or is being  
3 opened or closed, nor shall any pedestrian pass through, around, over, or under any  
4 crossing gate or barrier at a railroad crossing while the gate or barrier is closed or is  
5 being opened or closed.

6           (c) When stopping as required at a railroad crossing, the driver shall keep as far  
7 to the right of the highway as possible and shall not form two lanes of traffic unless the  
8 roadway is marked for four or more lanes of traffic.

9           (d) Any person who violates any provisions of this section shall be guilty of  
10 an infraction and punished in accordance with G.S. 20-176. Violation of this section  
11 shall not constitute negligence per se.

12 **"§ 20-142.2. Vehicles stop at certain grade crossing.**

13           The Department of Transportation may designate particularly dangerous highway  
14 crossings of railroads and erect stop signs at those crossings. When a stop sign is  
15 erected at a highway crossing of a railroad, the driver of any vehicle shall stop within 50  
16 feet but not less than 15 feet from the nearest rail of such grade crossing and shall  
17 proceed only upon exercising due care. Any person who violates this section shall be  
18 guilty of an infraction and punished in accordance with G.S. 20-176. Violation of this  
19 section shall not constitute negligence per se.

20 **"§ 20-142.3. Certain vehicles must stop at railroad grade crossing; placarding**  
21 **certain vehicles.**

22           (a) Before crossing at grade any track or tracks of a railroad, the driver of any  
23 school bus, any motor vehicle carrying passengers for compensation, any property-  
24 hauling motor vehicle over 10,000 pounds which is carrying hazardous materials, and  
25 any motor vehicle with a capacity of 16 or more persons shall stop the vehicle within 50  
26 feet but not less than 15 feet from the nearest rail of the railroad. While stopped, the  
27 driver shall listen and look in both directions along the track for any approaching train  
28 and shall not proceed until he can do so safely. Upon proceeding, the driver of the  
29 vehicle shall cross the track in a gear that allows the driver to cross the track without  
30 changing gears and the driver shall not change gears while crossing the track or tracks.

31           (b) Except for school buses, the provisions of this section shall not require  
32 the driver of a vehicle to stop:

33           (1) At railroad tracks used exclusively for industrial switching  
34 purposes within a business district.

35           (2) At a railroad grade crossing which a police officer or crossing  
36 flagman directs traffic to proceed.

37           (3) At a railroad grade crossing protected by a gate or flashing  
38 signal designed to stop traffic upon the approach of a train,  
39 when the gate or flashing signal does not indicate the approach  
40 of a train.

41           (4) At an abandoned railroad grade crossing which is marked with  
42 a sign indicating that the rail line is abandoned.

1           (5) At an industrial or spur line railroad grade crossing marked with  
2           a sign reading 'Exempt' erected by or with the consent of the  
3           appropriate State or local authority.

4           (c) It shall be unlawful to transport by motor vehicle upon the highways of this  
5 State any hazardous material without conspicuously marking or placarding the motor  
6 vehicle on each side and on the rear with the word 'DANGEROUS' or the common or  
7 generic name of the article transported or its principal hazard. Additionally, the rear of  
8 any such vehicle shall be conspicuously marked with the words 'THIS VEHICLE  
9 STOPS AT RAILROAD CROSSINGS' or 'WE STOP AT RR CROSSINGS.' A person  
10 violating the provisions of this subsection shall be guilty of an infraction and punished  
11 in accordance with G.S. 20-176. Violation of this section shall not constitute negligence  
12 per se.

13           (d) 'Hazardous materials,' for purposes of this section only, means any  
14 hazardous material required to be placarded under 49 C.F.R. § 171-180.

15           (e) The provisions of this section shall not apply to vehicles subject to Federal  
16 Motor Carrier Safety rules adopted by the Division of Motor Vehicles.

17 **"§ 20-142.4. Moving heavy equipment at railroad grade crossing.**

18           (a) No person shall operate or move any crawler-type tractor, crane, or roller or  
19 any equipment or structure having a normal operating speed of five or less miles per  
20 hour upon or across any tracks at a railroad crossing without first complying with this  
21 section.

22           (b) Notice of any intended crossing described in subsection (a) of this section  
23 shall be given to a superintendent of the railroad and a reasonable time be given to the  
24 railroad to provide protection at the crossing.

25           (c) Before making any crossing described in subsection (a) of this section, the  
26 person operating or moving the vehicle or equipment shall:

27                   (1) Stop the vehicle or equipment not less than 15 feet nor more  
28                   than 50 feet from the nearest rail of the railroad;

29                   (2) While stopped, shall listen and look both directions along the  
30                   track for any approaching train and for signals indicating the  
31                   approach of a train; and

32                   (3) Shall not proceed until the crossing can be made safely.

33           (d) No crossing described in subsection (a) of this section shall be made when  
34 warning is given by automatic signal or crossing gates or a flagman or otherwise of the  
35 immediate approach of a railroad train or car.

36           (e) Subsection (c) of this section shall not apply at any railroad crossing where  
37 State or local authorities have determined that trains are not operating during certain  
38 periods or seasons of the year and have erected an official sign carrying the legend  
39 'Exempt'.

40           (f) Any person who violates any provision of this section shall be guilty of an  
41 infraction and punished in accordance with G.S. 20-176. Violation of this section shall  
42 not constitute negligence per se.

43 **"§ 20-142.5. Stop when traffic obstructed.**

1           No driver shall enter an intersection or a marked crosswalk or drive onto any  
2 railroad grade crossing unless there is sufficient space on the other side of the  
3 intersection, crosswalk, or railroad grade crossing to accommodate the vehicle he is  
4 operating without obstructing the passage of other vehicles, pedestrians, or railroad  
5 trains, notwithstanding the indication of any traffic control signal to proceed. Any  
6 person who violates any provision of this section shall be guilty of an infraction and  
7 punished in accordance with G.S. 20-176. Violation of this section shall not constitute  
8 negligence per se."

9           Sec. 2. G.S. 20-142, 20-143, and 20-143.1 are repealed.

10           Sec. 3. This act becomes effective October 1, 1991, and applies to offenses  
11 occurring on or after that date.