

The Safety Committee Update - Trackin'

by Bob Knight, Chairman, NARCOA Safety Committee

Track, trackage, roadbed, rails, the vein of a railroad's existence and the subject of our desire! We all want that perfect ribbon of rail to run our motorcars on, don't we? But most of the time it is not so.

The host short lines or regional rails we run on have a constant battle with sun kinks, pullaparts, broken rails, high weeds, downed trees, earth movement of the roadbed, or flood and water damage as shown on the photo. Many times they do not have the manpower, equipment or finances to handle constant track repairs or surfacing of the roadbed. Therefore we as motorcar operators have to be on the constant lookout for changing track conditions.



Last year we had several track related accidents that involved bad rail joints, out of gauge track, and hitting wooden timbers used as planked crossings. Many accidents continue to happen at gravel grade crossings where the flange way is not clear and lifts the wheels off the rails causing the derailment of the motorcar. A particular accident sent the derailed motorcar approximately 12 to 15 feet before coming to a rest on a small wooden culvert type trestle; the motorcar ended up on its side.

Another accident happened where the roadbed had settled below the bridge rail surface height on both ends of the bridge. When several motorcars exited the bridge, the lead wheels did not drop to the lower roadbed height, and they derailed. In this situation two cars derailed, one being a MT-14 and the other a MT-19. In all of the above derailments, there was only property damage to the motorcar with no bodily injury.

While reviewing the above accident reports, it was found motorcar operators had become inattentive to changing track conditions, and also were traveling too fast for safe operation. Our "real bottom line" is *there are no substitutes for common sense and good judgment for the safe operation of our motorcars!*

Please keep it safe on the rails.

P.S.: You veterans have now mentored 59 new members. Way to go!