

LETTERS

Playing 'chicken' with trains a losing game

Last Wednesday afternoon while operating CN train 416 east from Vancouver to Kamloops, we encountered two teenage girls on the tracks in front of our train near Edgemount Road.

I repeatedly sounded the whistle in an attempt to have them clear off the tracks, which they did about 50 feet prior to the train reaching their location.

Upon arriving at the Kamloops yard office I was informed by the yardmaster that one of the girl's mothers had left a phone message thanking me for alerting the girls to the presence of the train.

Mom, I am sorry to tell you that your daughter lied to you. Both she and her friend were standing in the middle of the tracks facing me and were laughing as they jumped out of the way at the last possible moment while playing their game of "chicken."

I would appreciate you having another talk with your daughter and having her friend's mother do the same. Please explain to her the following scenarios that could have occurred:

- There are two tracks in that location. The girls, while focusing on their game most likely would not have heard another train approaching from the opposite direction on the very track that they ran across during their "game."

- Either one of them could have mis-

timed their jump out of the way, and/or slipped and fell as they were attempting to jump out of the way. I would then have initiated an emergency stop with this 9,000-foot, 7,000-ton train, which meant that I would have come to a stop about one half mile after running over the girl or girls. My conductor would have then had to walk back to witness something that would stay with him for the remainder of his days, not to mention the girls' friends who were standing 50 feet away from the tracks, and any unlucky residents nearby who happened to witness the carnage.

- When placing a train of that size and make-up into emergency, there is always a risk of a derailment due to in-train slack action forces at work.

This particular train was carrying numerous cars of dangerous commodities.

I do not have to spell out what the consequences of a derailment would have been to your family and your neighborhood.

So, mom, please hug your daughter and explain to her that her game was ill-conceived and patently dangerous, and that you love her and want to have her around for a long time to come.

BOB LEE

*CN Locomotive Engineer
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