

Media Release

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Children playing on tracks bound for tragedy

Australia's largest rail-based transport business, Aurizon is urging a fatality-free holiday period by keeping children away from trains and tracks after a number of disturbing near misses during 2016.

Aurizon's Head of Safety Neil Backer said the railway corridor and tracks are no place for children to play, or anyone else for that matter, and is calling for families to be particularly vigilant this holiday period.

"Our train drivers were shocked and left visibly shaken after an incident in April where children were playing in the railway corridor in Central Queensland," he said. "The drivers managed to stop the coal train before a tragedy potentially unfolded. The children were found in a drainage culvert near the tracks, only metres from the track."

Aurizon owns and operates the 2700 kilometre coal network in Central Queensland, as well as operating freight trains across the country. Aurizon operates about 160 trains a day and carries about 280 million tonnes of freight for customers each year.

There were a number of other near misses during 2016, including:

- January - A truck driver was lucky to be alive after his truck was hit by an Aurizon coal train when the driver didn't give way at a level crossing. The loaded Aurizon coal train was travelling to the Port of Brisbane when the truck crossed directly in front of the locomotive at the Cemetery Road level crossing in Chinchilla.
- July - Two train drivers were badly shaken after a head-on collision between a loaded coal train and a sedan on the Darling Downs. The vehicle veered into the rail corridor and into the path of an oncoming train. Miraculously the driver of the vehicle was able to escape his vehicle unhurt just moments before impact.
- November – A freight train collides with a car at Landsborough, north of Brisbane, pushing the vehicle hundreds of metres along the rail track. The incident caused major delays to the south-east Queensland passenger network. The car was found to be unoccupied when emergency service workers arrived at the scene.



The Landsborough incident in November. Reproduced from Brisbane Times, photo supplied by Clayton's Towing/Facebook

Mr Backer said Aurizon was extremely concerned by reports of people and children 'cutting' through the rail corridor to take a 'short cut'.

"These people are playing Russian roulette with their lives," he said. "By entering the rail corridor, people are not only breaking the law, they are putting themselves and others at risk of being injured or even worse, killed.

"Our drivers can't swerve to miss people on the track and it takes nearly two kilometres to stop a 10 thousand tonne train even with the application of the emergency brakes.

“Every near miss, incident or fatality on the rail network can also cause severe and ongoing trauma for our drivers and their families.

“Our message is simple – stay off the tracks, and stop, look, listen and think at level crossings. I encourage all families to discuss rail safety with their children and to practice safe behaviour around the rail corridor, particularly during the holiday period.

Aurizon has produced an animated Rail Safety video that all families should share with their children, available on the [Aurizon YouTube page](#).

For more information, please contact:

Brand & Communications: media@aurizon.com.au

