

DRAFT

Dear _____:

Please accept my deepest sympathies for the loss of _____ in a rail-related accident on _____ (date). As Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), a federal agency in charge of safety oversight for the U.S. railroad system, I am acutely aware of these incidents and wish to do something about them.

In fact, each year 300-400 people die on and around railroad property, not including those killed or injured at railroad crossings. Although no reliable statistics are available, several reports indicate that suicide may account for 30-50% of trespasser-related serious injuries and fatalities in the U.S. To help prevent these tragic accidents from occurring, I personally invite you to participate in an important national study on suicide prevention.

The primary objectives of this study are to: 1) understand the extent of and causal factors for rail-related suicides, and 2) develop effective countermeasures to reduce the incidence of suicide along railway properties, including grade crossings. This does not imply that we think this particular case was a suicide. We simply want to include your input from this incident into our database to help us determine the true extent of the problem. All information we collect from the study, regardless of cause, will help us develop a national suicide prevention program for the railroad system.

This study is being funded by the FRA, which awarded a grant to the Railroad Research Foundation (RRF), a non-profit foundation to improve railroad safety, to organize a committee that will focus on suicide prevention. RRF then hired the American Association of Suicidology (AAS) to gather detailed information about the causal factors of recently occurring fatalities on or near rail properties around the country.

After gathering and analyzing the data, the AAS will then produce a summary report with recommendations for specific countermeasures to prevent rail-related fatalities. This report will not include any detailed information on individual accidents. Any personally identifiable information about this particular incident will be held strictly confidential by the AAS and will not be reported to the public.

When the AAS contacts you, please consider participating in this very important study. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Joseph Boardman
Administrator