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NEWS RELEASE

Cane train incidents trigger safety warnings

A spike in collisions and near-hits with cane trains has prompted Australia's largest sugar manufacturer to issue fresh warnings about the need for vigilance around its cane rail network.

Wilmar Sugar's General Manager Cane Supply and Grower Relations Paul Giordani said he was alarmed by the number of incidents where vehicles had failed to give way to cane trains or where children had been caught 'riding' cane bins.

"We are very concerned about the number of hits and near-hits we have seen around our rail crossings this season, a number of which have been captured by our on-board loco cameras," he said.

"Many of the recent incidents involve local children or sugar industry workers.

"While complacency appears to play a role in some cases, in others, children are choosing to engage in risky and dangerous behaviours by jumping on and off moving cane bins."

Wilmar Sugar owns and operates eight sugar mills across the Herbert, Burdekin, Proserpine and Sarina regions.

Mr Giordani said the company had installed front and rear facing cameras on its entire Herbert loco fleet, and was progressively fitting cameras on all locos in its other milling regions.

CCTV from one of Wilmar's Burdekin locos captured detailed footage of a haulout truck colliding with a cane train, after failing to give way at an occupational crossing.

As the train approaches the crossing, the haulout truck can be seen exiting a paddock ahead of the locomotive, and travelling in the same direction for a short distance before cutting across the cane rail crossing in front of the oncoming cane train.

Other 2022 season incidents include:

- Several reports of children 'riding' on cane bins through the Ingham town corridor
- Ten near-hits in the Herbert region involving vehicles at road crossings and haulout vehicles at cane rail sidings
- A collision in the Burdekin where a car failed to give way to a cane train at a level crossing

- A near-hit in the Burdekin where a haulout vehicle crossed a cane rail line in front of a loco
- A near-hit in the Burdekin involving a bobcat working near the cane rail line without authorisation
- An incident in Proserpine involving an excavator travelling along the cane rail line colliding with a locomotive
- A near-hit in Proserpine where a member of the public was waiting for a bus too close to the rail line
- A collision in the Sarina region where a haulout vehicle crossed in front of a fully-laden cane train.

Mr Giordani said it was fortunate that none of the incidents had resulted in serious injury or worse. However, some of the vehicles and equipment had sustained significant damage.

“With several weeks remaining till the end of the season, I’d urge all road users to exercise extreme caution around our cane rail network,” Mr Giordani said.

“Cane trains operate 24/7 during the crushing season.

“They can’t swerve and they can’t come to a quick stop. Please approach all cane rail crossings with caution, obey all signs and signals, and always give way to cane trains.”

ENDS



Onboard loco cameras captured this collision between a haulout vehicle and a Wilmar cane train at a cane rail crossing in the Burdekin.



An excavator sustained significant damage when it collided with a cane train at Proserpine.



Wilmar Sugar's General Manager Cane Supply and Grower Relations Paul Giordani.

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