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NEWS RELEASE

Incidents mar opening months of crush

Wilmar Sugar Australia is urging people to take more care around its cane railway network after a concerning spate of cane train incidents in the opening months of the 2020 crushing season.

The warning comes as Wilmar released shocking footage of a crash between a harvester and cane train that occurred at Ingham last month.

The footage, obtained from a camera on the locomotive, shows the harvester crossing on to the cane railway track in front of the oncoming cane train.

Despite the loco driver applying brakes and sounding the horn repeatedly, the collision could not be avoided. Fortunately, no one was injured in the crash but the locomotive and harvester both sustained substantial damage.

General Manager Cane Supply and Grower Relations Paul Giordani said the incident reinforced why motorists needed to stay alert around Wilmar's cane railway network and always give way to oncoming cane trains.

"Cane trains can't swerve and they can't stop quickly," Mr Giordani said.

"Locomotives can haul in excess of 1,000 tonnes of rolling weight, so can take up to one kilometre to stop after brakes are applied.

"As this incident proves, even if a loco driver sees you on the track, he or she may not be able to stop in time to avoid hitting you."

Mr Giordani said that despite Wilmar's widely promoted 'Use your train brain' campaign, a minority of people were unnecessarily putting themselves and loco crews at risk by not exercising enough caution around cane trains.

"We've had a disappointing run of incidents across our four milling regions since crushing started in June," he said.

"There have been a number of collisions, including three in the Herbert region, and several near hits."

They include:

- A cane train collided with a vehicle at a rail crossing on a private road at Ingham in June.
- Children were seen playing on a cane railway bridge at Sarina during the June-July school holidays.
- Children were seen playing in between cane bins in the Inkerman Mill bin yard at Home Hill during the June-July school holidays.
- A woman was seen lying beside a cane railway track at Ingham in early July. She got up and left as a cane train approached.
- Children on a quad bike were seen racing a cane train around cane sidings at Proserpine in late July.
- A locomotive collided with the front of a utility parked too close to the cane railway line at Proserpine in late July.
- A cane train had a minor collision with a harvester in the Toobana area, south of Ingham, in late July.

“Any one of those incidents had potential for someone to be seriously injured or worse,” Mr Giordani said.

With more than three months of crushing left to go, Mr Giordani appealed to all members of the public to keep clear of Wilmar’s cane rail infrastructure and to stay safe around cane trains.

“Please approach all cane railway crossings with caution, obey all signs and signals, and always give way to oncoming cane trains,” he said.

ENDS

Photos and vision available on request.



Wilmar’s General Manager Cane Supply and Grower Relations Paul Giordani is urging people to take more care around Wilmar’s cane rail network following a spate of collisions and near-hits.



A collision between a cane harvester and a cane train last month resulted in substantial damage but, fortunately, no injuries.



Cane bins were derailed when a cane train and cane harvester collided in the Herbert region last month.

Contact: Leanne Oliveri 0447 791 226 or Kylie Newman 0409 272 794.