



Slippery Rail

And How It Affects Your Commute

*I*n autumns past, you may have heard our train crews mention "slip-slide" to explain minor service delays you may have recently experienced. This condition is created by a slimy substance left by crushed leaves on our rails that gets even more slippery and slimy after it rains.

When a train attempts to speed up or slow down, this gelatinous "slime" can cause the wheels to slip or slide along the rails. In severe cases the train will automatically make an emergency stop, because the on-board computer system perceives "slip-sliding" as excessive speed.

All this slip-sliding and braking can create flat spots on the train's wheels, forcing us to take much needed equipment out of service to make repairs.

But thanks to our proactive approach, you've been experiencing slippery rail less frequently. This is due to a number of changes we have enacted.

We've reprogrammed the software of our M7 fleet to allow the braking system to adjust to slip-slide conditions. And we have instructed our engineers to report slippery conditions immediately to our Operations Control Center. We have also trained them in how to operate through these "slippery" areas.

In addition, we have enhanced our computerized train-tracking system to allow for automatic reporting of slip-slide incidents and conditions, enabling us to take corrective action more quickly.

One thing you will notice is that under extreme conditions, we now reduce speeds through problem areas. While this may result in a slight delay to your service, it also prevents a greater delay because of wheel damage. And no flat spots on train wheels also means we can operate at regular speeds in non-problem areas.

Along with training and technology, we are also cleaning more — we use rail washers and scrubbers more frequently to remove dead leaves from the tracks. And on-board "sanders" on our trains automatically drop sand on our tracks to help improve traction and reduce wheel slippage when it begins to occur.

Remember: We can reduce the incidents of slippery rail but we cannot eliminate them. We will continue our efforts to try to minimize any delays and inconvenience slippery rail may create for you this autumn. And, as always, we appreciate your patience...