The Northern Territory Government is considering substantially increasing fines for disobeying rail crossing signs as part of a safety assessment following the recent train derailment.

Chief Minister Clare Martin said that after three years of operation, the railway did not seem to have a systematic problem with safety but an assessment would still be undertaken for level crossings.

“Boom-gates at every level crossing are not the answer when every one of the 229 level crossings in the Territory meets national standards,” said Ms Martin.

“ The Department of Planning and Infrastructure will assess every level crossing including any changes in usage since the railway started.

“ I met representatives of the trucking and rail industries and we agreed to work in partnership to minimise the risk of crashes at level crossings.

“ Together we will look at options for improving education, enforcement and sanctions to change poor road behaviour at level crossings.

“Investigations by the Australian Transport Safety Bureau and their findings will also need to be considered.

“ I am advised that the current penalties for ignoring a stop sign stand at $80.

“ This penalty does not translate to the potential for catastrophic loss of life and damage to property with a train collision. Next year the Government will introduce heftier fines and demerits for this traffic offence at level crossings.

“ The NT Police will also be increasing enforcement at level crossings.

“ We will continue to broadcast and print our education campaign on level crossings which have run for three years now.

“ The ‘stop, look, listen and think’ campaign is self explanatory - stop means stop!

“ As part of the campaign material will be sent to industry representatives to raise awareness in the mining, pastoral and transport industries,” said Ms Martin.

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