

FOC sector reports and responses

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40611 'Unsafe' walking route at Leicester station

A reporter has several concerns about a walking route which runs from Leicester station to a staff car park. The walking route is mainly owned by EWS, but is used by staff from EWS, Network Rail and CrossCountry alike. Network Rail is responsible for a short part of the route, nearest to the station.

There are four main issues, according to the reporter:

- **Lighting.**
There are two tower lights on the route itself. One has been broken for a long time and recently the other broke as well and there are now no working lights on the walking route. In the car park there is only one light working out of about six.
- **Criminal activities in the car park.**
The isolated location and the lack of lighting make the car park attractive to prostitutes and other undesirables.
- **Unsecured plastic grill.**
A plastic drain cover in the car park floats away when the drain floods, putting staff at risk of stepping into the drain.
- **Slippery rubber mats.**
Rubber mats are in place on the walking route where the route crosses the railway tracks. These become slippery in icy weather. The reporter states that these mats are present on both EWS' and Network Rail's part of the route.

All these factors present various safety risks to all staff using the walking route, such as slips, falls and assault, and in particular female staff are vulnerable.

Could both EWS and Network Rail please refer to the issues highlighted above and address as appropriate?

Response from DB Schenker (formerly EWS)

- **Lighting**
There are two tower lights on the route itself. One has been broken for a long time and recently the other broke as well and there are now no working lights on the walking route. In the car park there is only one light working out of about six.
The lights in the yard are not used, there are no operational requirements at this present time and these sidings are currently out of use.

We are looking into getting the lights on the refuelling area repaired to improve the lighting to the central area of the walking route in the very near future. The faulty car park lights will also be checked to see if they can be repaired.

- **Criminal activities in the car park**
The isolated location and the lack of lighting make the car park attractive to prostitutes and other undesirables.
Leicester depot or staffs has had no criminal activities reported the lighting from surrounding buildings is adequate lighting we are currently working with Network Rail to identify unauthorized parking at Leicester to which none as been reported.

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- Unsecured plastic grill
A plastic drain cover in the car park floats away when the drain floods, putting staff at risk of stepping into the drain.
All drain covers have been checked and can not identify this issue
- Slippery rubber mats
Rubber mats are in place on the walking route where the route crosses the railway tracks. These become slippery in icy weather. The reporter states that these mats are present on both EWS's and Network Rail's part of the route.
Maintenance of crossing areas has been discussed with Network Rail and a new regime has been implemented during poor weather conditions. The foot crossings on the sidings are owned by EWS. Salt bins are located at each of the foot crossings on the walking route. The EWS have agreed to provide shovels at these bins so additional treatments by staff can be undertaken if required when passing, and EWS groundstaff will treat the walking route if required.

Network Rail agreed to treat the walking route daily when frost is expected.

40653 Changes to the base rosters causes fatigue

Last minute changes to base rosters at GB Railfreight resulting in fatigue and non compliance with the fatigue index is a concern for one reporter.

According to the reporter the base rosters are constantly being changed at very short notice. This is resulting in staff working several consecutive weeks of night shifts causing fatigue amongst staff, as well as affecting their family life. With the constant changes to the base rosters, the reporter feels that they no longer comply with the fatigue index. However, the reporter is keen to state that staff are still getting their appropriate rest days.

The reporter would like to highlight that fatigue could result in a safety related incident, such as a SPAD. There has apparently been a fatigue related incident in the past and as a result the reporter states that several recommendations were made. These included:

- not booking on between 00:00 and 04:00;
- not allowing staff returning from annual leave to be rostered on before 08:00;
- not allowing staff who have worked a night shift to undertake any driving duties after 07:00 the next day.

The reporter believes that these recommendations are now being breached.

In order to resolve the issues, the reporter suggests that the base rosters for GB Railfreight should not be altered. If this is not possible on occasion, the reporter requests that change of shifts should be optional for staff and that a suitable notice period be given to staff affected.

Please comment.

Response from GB Railfreight

All of FGBRf base rosters are validated against the *RSSB Fatigue Index* prior to implementation.

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FGBRf base rosters are changed only on the occasion of new staff arriving at a location, or there being a significant change to the workload at that location. This is standard practice throughout the industry. When the need to change our base rosters arises, we always publish the proposals to all staff concerned and welcome any feedback, which is then considered, before the final implementation. Following the implementation, staff are free to "claim" any rest days from the previous roster pattern, by mutually agreeing where they are to be moved from in the new roster.

The 'recommendations' as listed are incorrect and are as follows:

1. No booking on between the hours of 00.02 & 03.59
2. Staff returning from weekly rostered annual leave will not be rostered on before 06.00
3. All turns booking on at 00.01 or the previous night are planned so that staff will finish train/van driving or train working activity no later than 08.00. If this is not possible, then mitigation measures (such as double manning, taxis or travelling on passenger services) shall be considered and approval sought from the Head of Production (or nominated deputy) or On-Call Operations Manager, if out of hours.

These constraints placed on rostering practices are in fact voluntary and did not arise as a result of any post incident recommendations. The measures were discussed and agreed by the Operations Executive Group as it was felt that we should give our staff as much as assistance as possible in managing their work/life balance. Their introduction is part of our continued commitment to effectively manage the potential for fatigue and in several instances the processes we follow have been externally verified, with confirmation received that they are an effective measure.

The introduction of these measures has received a widespread welcome and adherence to these guidelines is strictly monitored by the management team.

40722 Shornemead crossing dangers at Hoo Junction depot

A reporter has raised concerns over risks present at the Shornemead crossing at Hoo Junction depot. According to the reporter, there have been a number of near misses on this public and farm crossing, involving both pedestrians and private vehicles, but no decisive steps have yet been taken to improve the situation.

Shornemead crossing is situated just outside Hoo Junction depot, on the up-side of the main lines. It is regularly crossed by trains being shunted from Hoo Junction depot onto the main lines and back. For this purpose a position light is in place before the crossing. When shunting long trains, drivers often have trouble seeing the position light from the cab, as they could be a few hundred yards away, waiting for the signal to clear so they can propel back into the siding. The signal is particularly hard to see if it is sunny or hazy weather. According to the reporter, Network Rail did agree to install a repeater signal a couple of years ago, but nothing has happened.

Further, if the train is not blocking the crossing whilst waiting for permission to propel back, there is a risk that pedestrians will start to cross behind the train, as they do not expect the train to reverse because they are not familiar with the workings of the railway. The reporter feels that the general public should not have access to this crossing at all.

Only the farmer is supposed to have access to opening the locked gates at Shornemead crossing.

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According to the reporter however, it seems that many other people have been given copies of the key and some do not bother to call the signaller before crossing despite the instructions on display. When staff propel trains out of the depot, there is not a clear view of the crossing, and if a member of the public is crossing without the signaller's permission they could easily be hit by the train.

For Network Rail:

- Will a repeater signal be installed in the near future?
- Is it possible to issue a key for this crossing which cannot be copied by a locksmith?

For Network Rail and DB Schenker:

The reporter suggests that Network Rail and DB Schenker should carry out a joint risk assessment on the systems of working around this crossing. Would this be possible?

Response from DB Schenker

The issue of access to the crossing isn't as straight forward as first appears. There are approximately seven official key holders, along with pedestrian access to the public. Work has been done jointly with Network Rail in the past to try and reduce the risks.

As a result of this report DB Schenker's Area Production Manager for Hoo Junction has raised this issue at a meeting with Local Network Rail Management.

The method of work and a risk assessment have recently been reviewed and we believe they meet our internal and statutory requirements. The real issue here is that the public are able to gain access through an unlocked gate. Our APM has stated to NR that given that this was not a public right of way the best option would be to remove the gate. This would reduce the risk to 'key holders' of the vehicle access gate, which is controlled by a process involving a telephone direct to the signaller.

The difficulty DB Schenker has is that mainline crossings are the responsibility of Network Rail and DBS can only try to influence their process. We will continue to press for closure of the pedestrian gate.

40718 Senior managers driving trains

Senior managers may be driving trains at GB Railfreight three or four times a year without the required route and traction knowledge, according to one reporter. The reporter is not alleging these managers - who are clearly rail enthusiasts - are poor drivers, but that their route and traction knowledge is lapsing because they drive so infrequently. In the reporter's opinion, this largely unacknowledged practice compromises safety by allowing a form of 'self-certification' to creep in for one group with special privileges, whilst other drivers must adhere to the rules.

The reporter believes Railway Group Standards state that a driver must go over a route at least four times in a 16 week period to maintain an up-to-date route knowledge card. If this threshold is not met, the reporter states that refresher training would normally be required. Only fully qualified drivers with the required competencies should drive trains, he argues.

- Could the RSSB please clarify what the requirements are for route and traction knowledge?
- Could GB Railfreight look into the issues raised?

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These concerns have not been officially raised through GB Railfreight's own channels because the reporter fears the subject matter will generate an adverse reaction at a senior level. Though mindful of the potential reaction, he believes the issue needs to be addressed before it is exposed in an incident.

Response from GB Railfreight

All members of the operations management team who have driving competence are subjected to exactly the same competence management system (CMS) as drivers. An additional control measure mandates that managers must undertake a specific amount of train driving every period. Driving time is logged and monitored. This is a formally acknowledged practice and ensures that neither route nor traction competence lapses.

Railway Group Standards no longer specify route retention criteria and therefore First GBRf base route knowledge retention and assessment frequency on the degree of risk associated with the route concerned. If an operations manager hasn't driven over a route within the defined time he will ensure that a route refresher is undertaken, a route conductor is provided or the route is removed from his route card.

Similarly, traction competence is based on the risk and complexity of operation of the particular traction type. Route and traction competence of operations management who retain their competence is monitored and maintained by GBRf's Operations Standards Department. They ensure that the appropriate competencies have been achieved before any member of the operations management team are permitted to drive any type of traction over a given route. This forms a part of First GBRf's verification processes and ensure that no-one is self-certifying.

Response from RSSB

Railway Group Standards no longer provide any requirements relating to route knowledge since the withdrawal of *GO/RT3251* and its accompanying *Code of Practice GO/RC3551*. Railway Group Standards only deal with interface issues: route knowledge and retention is deemed to be a single duty holder responsibility.

RSSB, therefore, is not able to comment on GB Railfreight's requirements for route knowledge training, knowledge retention or required frequencies for driving over a route.

40632 Sectional appendices missing or out of date

A reporter is concerned that there do not seem to be enough sectional appendices available to DB Schenker drivers. This means they lack potential vital information about train speeds, stations and local instructions.

According to the reporter, some drivers have requested sectional appendices several times without result. Many drivers have sectional appendices which are very much out of date or have none at all. They are left to rely on notes from other drivers and other handouts, which ultimately do not contain the same amount of information about a route as a sectional appendix.

Can DB Schenker take steps to ensure that all drivers have the relevant up-to-date sectional appendices?

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Further information - The reporter believes this is a problem within DB Schenker in general, but refers to the East Coast Main Line specifically.

Response from DB Schenker

Our Operations Standards Manager has looked into the issue with sectional appendices for the LNE zone and can confirm that sufficient copies are ordered when the appendices are amended. He has spoken with the local Production Managers about the importance of this documentation being available to their staff. They have no knowledge of anyone requiring one however they are available on request, staff are encourage to speak to their Production Manager if they feel that there is a lack of information available.

The whole issue of documentation is being looked into by a sub-group of ATOC Driver Management Group with a view to streamlining/reviewing requirements.