

FOC sector reports and responses

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40767 Doubts over training at Margam depot

A reporter seeks reassurance that staff working at Margam depot will receive full training for the shunting and examining tasks they will be expected to carry out in the coming months. The workforce at Margam depot is currently being downsized, and a new engineering grade is being created. The reporter believes the training currently under discussion is likely to fall short in achieving its objective of producing competent personnel. This report is being raised through CIRAS because staff are uncomfortable raising it internally in the current business climate.

Staff on the freight side will now have to work in bays at Corus steelworks close by. The reporter is concerned that they won't receive enough training and supervision to carry out their tasks safely. Staff will have to supervise the loading of large steel coils into wagons. The combined weight of these coils can be over 70 tonnes. To avoid any movement or unravelling they have to be seated and banded together correctly. It is being suggested that three or four days' training for this will suffice, but the reporter views this as wholly inadequate. In the past, the training programme would have lasted much longer, with staff new to the job being supervised by an experienced member of the team for several months.

The reporter is also concerned that staff on the traction side will be required to learn shunting in three weeks - which actually includes many half days - and go out into a busy yard without the required skills and knowledge.

In addition staff are doing the rolling stock technician (RST) course in a single day; this course used to take several weeks. The reporter fears that they won't be assessed properly on the required number of trains – which always used to be ten – and will not acquire anything like the knowledge they needed for the old exam.

The reporter requests that DB Schenker:

- clarify what the training for supervised loading, shunting and RST checks will be;
- clarify how many hours each part will entail; and
- review the proposed training requirements against the likelihood of incident.

Response from DB Schenker

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the reporter for raising their concerns.

The tasks commented upon are performed by staff appointed to a new position of engineering team member production. DB Schenker fully consulted with the relevant trade unions when introducing this position and due cognisance was taken of comments made by the trade union representatives.

As holders of this new position are required to undertake safety critical duties, the position has been broken down into separate elements and all relevant tasks have been fully assessed, with an appropriate competence assessment regime introduced for each element.

The duties of this position are an amalgamation of other roles, and it is therefore likely that different applicants for the position will have differing levels of previous experience, as a result of which a training needs analysis (TNA) is undertaken for each applicant.

The results of this TNA are then used to facilitate the production of a training course, which is tailored to the requirements of the specific member of staff concerned. As a result it is not possible to identify particular timescales for the different aspects of this training.

We can assure the reporter that no member of staff will be allowed to undertake any safety critical duties until such time as they have passed the appropriate competence assessment.

40878 'Inadequate' shunter training

A reporter is concerned about the perceived lack of training given to train drivers in order for them to carry out shunting duties.

Drivers are currently receiving between four and seven days shunter training but the reporter believes that drivers should have at least eight weeks training, like someone new to the railway would. According to the reporter, management seem to have a different view on this and believe that as the staff are already drivers, they can shunt trains with less training.

The reporter is concerned that not enough time is being spent carrying out manoeuvres and, as a result, staff do not feel they are competent to carry out shunting duties.

In addition to this, some drivers are experiencing travel times of up to two hours each way to reach the depot where they are to carry out their shunting duties. Although staff are still receiving a 12 hour rest period, these travel times are leading to them becoming fatigued and unable to concentrate.

- Would Freightliner consider giving drivers more shunter training?
- Does Freightliner have a policy outlining maximum hours staff are expected to travel to and from work?

Response from Freightliner Heavy Haul

In response to report 40878, I can confirm that this matter has been thoroughly investigated not only by Freightliner Heavy Haul but also by the ORR, as a member of staff made a similar complaint.

Freightliner Heavy Haul training has been risk assessed and approved as suitable and sufficient. No member of staff are passed competent until they feel competent to do so themselves and have satisfied the assessor of their competency.

All diagrams for this work are compliant and do not exceed working hours laid down in Freightliner procedures.

40886 Class 66 horns 'too quiet'

A reporter is concerned that horns on the class 66 trains are now 'too quiet' since modifications began about six months ago.

Drivers have noticed that track workers do not acknowledge trains as promptly as they used to and this has resulted in drivers having to blow their horns much more and for longer. In some of the units, the horns can hardly be heard.

Direct Rail Services are aware of the issue as both written and verbal internal reports have been made. However, the reporter thinks that the issue is not being dealt with and fears that a track worker may be run over if they do not hear a train coming and move away in good time. It is believed that modifications were made because the horns were considered to be too loud. However, the reporter feels that the level has gone too far the other way and they are now deemed to be 'too quiet'.

The reporter suggests the horns on class 66 trains be made a bit louder so they can be heard by track workers sooner. Could Direct Rail Services consider this suggestion?

Response from Direct Rail Services

The sound pressure levels emitted by the warning horns fitted to rail vehicles are governed by the values mandated in the *Railway Group Standard* in force at the time that they were built.

Over the past 12 years, the warning horn sound pressure levels mandated in the *Railway Group Standard* (GM/RT2180 & GM/RT2484) have decreased significantly.

Direct Rail Services locomotives 66421 – 66430 were delivered with non-compliant horns due to issues achieving the low sound pressure levels required in the *Railway Group Standard* (GM/RT 2484 Audibility Requirements for Trains Issue 2 April 2007). After much work by the locomotive manufacturer electromotive diesel, a compliant horn system has been designed and retrofitted to the locomotives, this is the modification programme referred to by the reporter. The locomotives were modified in a period from February 2009 to March 2009. Direct Rail Services latest batch of locomotives 66431 – 66434 have been delivered with compliant horns.

The issue described by the reporter has been discussed at the company safety committee on a number of occasions and an instruction issued to all train crew via their safety representative to report all cases of lineside staff failing to acknowledge the warning horn.

The issue of warning horn sound pressure levels mandated in GM/RT2484 has been discussed at the class 66 User's Group Meeting (attended by all FOCs) where concern has been expressed at the low levels mandated.

It is Direct Rail Service's intention to use the information gathered from train crew reports to appeal (along with all other affected FOCs) to RSSB for a change to the warning horn sound pressure levels mandated in GM/RT2484.

Direct Rail Services would welcome RSSB's comments on this issue.