

# Network Rail and sub-Network Rail sector reports and responses

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## **40829 Training for new bidirectional line between Lichfield and Rugby**

A reporter has expressed concern about the training given to Virgin Pendolino drivers for the new bidirectional line which is becoming operational between Lichfield and Rugby in November. The training programme consists of drivers being shown a DVD one day, and then taken out by an instructor in a service car at 125mph - perhaps a little too fast to take it all in - on another day.

The reporter says that although the DVD is useful the new route, which has signals on a different side, requires first hand driving experience to ensure safe driving when it becomes operational.

Unfortunately, drivers will not be receiving first hand driving experience on the new route, largely because of the difficulty in obtaining consent and suitable paths from Network Rail. The reporter suggests that a road learning car - rather than a service car - could be run down the bidirectional line as part of the training programme. This might be possible if train services were temporarily diverted down a line running parallel to the Lichfield and Rugby line, used in the event of a train failure or engineering work.

For Network Rail:

What are the operational constraints preventing the reporter's suggestion of diverting trains along the parallel line to allow for training to be implemented?

For Virgin:

Please comment on the reporter's main point that there is no real substitute for first hand driving experience on a new bidirectional route. In any future reviews of the training for such changes in signalling arrangements, could consideration be given to more learning time for drivers on new routes?

## **Response from Network Rail**

Network Rail would like to thank the reporter for raising their concern regarding training for the new bidirectional line between Lichfield and Rugby.

Where a company has drivers to train, it is up to that company to decide which training methods it chooses to adopt. However, if any company wishes to consider the option of using route learning trains, then Network Rail would consider any bids for such paths in the normal way. Network Rail would work to identify paths for them in the timetable, with the agreement of all companies affected.

## **40565 Metric system not applied in the West Highlands region**

A reporter is concerned about the continued use of imperial measurement in the West Highlands region, where the radio electronic token block (RETB) is used.

Despite the new metric system being introduced and implemented throughout the entire UK railway network at the end of last year (2007), imperial measurements has continued in the West Highlands region, north of Helensburgh, when signallers and drivers communicate with each other.

Normally, freight train drivers use the computer-generated train list posted in their cabin to communicate the length of their freight train to signallers. However, when entering the section at Helensburgh, drivers have to convert this length into feet manually.

As a single track railway section, it is important for signallers to know the exact length of trains to ensure the passing of trains at stations occurs safely. The reporter is concerned that a freight train driver might miscalculate the conversion length of their train which could mean an on-coming train is allowed to pass it unsafely, resulting in a collision or side slip occurring. The reporter is aware of such an incident occurring with an excursion train.

- Why have Network Rail pursued the use of the imperial method in communicating freight train lengths in the West Highlands region when this has changed in the rest of the UK?
- If Network Rail intend on continuing with this practice in this region, could conversions be provided to drivers for ease of communication and to reduce the risk of miscalculations occurring?
- Could Network Rail also brief signallers to use metres instead of feet?

## Response from Network Rail

Network Rail would like to thank the reporter for raising their concern regarding the use of imperial measurement in the West Highlands region. Network Rail's response to the questions posed is as follows:

Could conversions be provided to drivers for ease of communication and to reduce the risk of miscalculations occurring?

On investigation all freight drivers have a copy of conversion tables attached to their working manuals Table A (Converts SLUs into feet/metres). As an action the Local Operations Manager at Fort William, will engage with the freight users to check that all their drivers have copies of the conversion tables.

Why have Network Rail pursued the use of the imperial method in communicating freight train lengths in the West Highlands region when this has changed in the rest of the UK?

Network Rail is aware that some may perceive this as an inconsistency. However, the *Signallers RETB Regulations (Aug 2008)* 3.2 states;

“When a train is stationary and is ready to enter the system, the driver will establish radio contact with the signaller, and:

1. Advise the signaller of the train identity and radio number of the train or mobile equipment.
2. Tell the signaller the location of the train, and the length of the train in feet.”

However, it is worth mentioning that whatever system of measurement is used the most important aspect is for train crew always to report whether a train is “in clear” at a crossing loop – if necessary, carrying out a physical check to confirm this, as required by the RETB instructions.

The *Drivers RETB Regulations (Aug 2008)* 2.4 states;

“When your train is ready to enter the system, you must tell the signaller:

- the identity of your train
- the radio number of your cab display unit
- the total length of your train in feet”

Could Network Rail also brief signallers to use metres instead of feet?

The answer is yes, however the most important aspect is for train crew always to report whether a train is “in clear” at a crossing loop – if necessary, carrying out a physical check to confirm this, as required by the RETB instructions. By undertaking this basic but important task the risk of a collision or side swipe as the reporter mentions will be reduced. To change this formally we would have to change some of our systems and processes as well as briefing our people and this is not considered necessary at this time.

## **40781 Rocking of class 444 and 450 trains**

A reporter is concerned about braking performance on class 444 and 450 trains. As the train's brakes are applied, rather than coming to a smooth stop, the train jolts causing bikes to fall over and get damaged. The reporter is worried that a passenger or a member of train crew will fall and injure themselves. The jolting has been noticed between Weymouth and Dorchester, the Eastleigh area, and in the Basingstoke to Woking area.

The reporter believes the cause of the problem to be a fault on the wheel sets of the second and third coaches of the train. The reporter is aware that the cause of this rocking is known as ‘torsion rigidity’. Such train faults can cause lasting track damage if left unaddressed.

The reporter would like to see the matter investigated to determine the exact cause of the rocking and see it rectified. The suggestion is for wheel sets to be reviewed and repaired.

Previous reports about the shaking of trains have been received by CIRAS in the past 12 months. In particular, two of these (40484, sent to South West Trains and Network Rail, and 40746, sent to South West Trains only) were about the Basingstoke area in which track quality issues were identified by the reporter. This new report may have associations with the same issues raised in the previous reports.

For Network Rail:

- Could investigations be carried out to assess track quality at the aforementioned sites?
- The response to 40484 states that a long-term solution was with the Network Rail Engineering Department. What solutions have been implemented and can they be applied to the areas mentioned above to rectify the issues?

For South West Trains:

- Could under frame inspections be made of the 444 and 450 trains?
- Have South West Trains received reports about rough riding in the areas mentioned?

## **Response from Network Rail**

Network Rail would like to thank the reporter for raising their concern regarding the riding characteristics of class 444 and 450 trains operating over the Wessex route.

However, after lengthy discussion we came to the conclusion that the responsibility to respond belongs to South West Trains. This conclusion was reached because from a track quality point of view, no reason can be found for this phenomenon as there is no evidence that the track geometry is being affected.

There are no out-of-specification track conditions in the areas that the reporter identifies, except over short lengths in the Hook area where weak banks have resulted in track condition that requires regular tamping attention and which we address as necessary.

## **40813 Concerns over section of track near Chartham station**

Concerns have been raised over a stretch of track near Chartham station in Kent, running over underbridge number 1900. When a train passes over here at line speed (70mph) the train will jolt and shake from side to side, and the reporter is concerned there is a risk of derailment. Because the shaking only occurs when trains pass over at high speed, only trains that do not stop at Chartham will experience this.

This piece of track has been inspected recently by Network Rail but no fault was found; however train staff are not satisfied that the track is safe. The reporter is concerned that, if nothing can be seen on inspection, it might be because the rails are moving when a train passes over them at speed. This is hard to observe directly due to the constraints of the bridge and so the reporter suggests inspectors should travel in a train which passes over the bridge at line speed to experience the problem.

A speed restriction of 50mph has recently been imposed, but it is unclear why this has been done.

The reporter asks:

- what were the exact findings of the investigation carried out in June on this stretch of track;
- would Network Rail carry out a further investigation to specifically assess whether the rails move when a train passes over them at line speed; and
- would Network Rail assess the structural integrity of the bridge itself?

## **Response from Network Rail**

Network Rail would like to thank the reporter for raising the above concern. Safety is an important issue for Network Rail.

Track alignment over this bridge is a known issue and extensive works are planned for late November to significantly improve the ride quality. Information on our planned work had been fed back to Southeastern after a previous enquiry. Delays to this improvement work are due to the time and track access required to carry out works that give a long term solution.

We take our responsibility for safety of the line very seriously. After each instance that ride quality was questioned, a team of competent staff was sent to assess the site and organise any work required. Measurements were taken to ensure track layout was within safe limits, which are governed by strict standards we are required to comply with. There was some very minor maintenance done to improve ride quality but there was nothing evident to consider applying more stringent measures.

Track (including this section) is monitored by train-borne measuring equipment on a monthly basis. This is in addition to our site inspections and patrols. We have technicians examine complex data reports from this and check for deterioration. This system measures track

under load and with numerous site visits also examining track under passage of trains, we are satisfied that safety is not compromised.

Other examinations also confirmed that there was no significant movement under traffic. As the reporter suggests, it is sometimes difficult to assess without having experienced it first hand. We have had 'cab rides' completed and although the ride quality is certainly of concern, this suggests our inspections and quality data are correct.

After the last report, it was decided to impose a speed restriction of 50mph considering the personal safety of our own staff responding 'on site'. The "kick" quoted is over a long distance, so is more related to ride quality and passenger comfort than it is to safety.

The structure of the bridge is subject to an inspection and maintenance regime as would be expected. The last recorded inspection, by the senior structures management engineer's team highlighted no issues of concern, with the bridge left in a serviceable condition.

It is important that we manage our track and keep it safe. Occasionally conditions do change suddenly, such as during periods of extreme weather. Inspection and monitoring will continue until the programmed works are completed. We would thank the reporter for their attentiveness and would hope that this response helps allay any concerns.

## **40821 Condition, positioning and use of speed restriction boards**

A reporter has contacted CIRAS with concerns about the condition and positioning of temporary speed restriction (TSR) boards and the use of limited clearance speed restriction boards throughout the Ipswich and Felixstowe areas.

**Condition of TSR boards** - The first concern is that the TSR boards are always dirty and many are no long reflective, making them difficult if not impossible to see at night. This poses the obvious hazard that a driver could travel through a speed restriction at an inappropriate speed without knowing. The reporter adds that simply cleaning the boards does not work as they are covered in a number of year's worth of dirt and oil.

Could Network Rail comment on the possibility of replacing the TSR boards in this area and ensure they are clean and visible in all conditions?

**Positioning of TSR boards** - The second concern is that the reporter finds the positioning of these boards unusual. TSR boards are meant to be securely fixed in the ballast next to the track. However, the reporter has seen them fixed to posts of OLE and placed in buckets filled with ballast. This presents two problems, the first is that sometimes the OLE posts are on a curve and so the board is placed out of the driver's direct line of sight. The second is that the boards are not secure when placed in the buckets and can easily fall over. In both instances the driver may not see the board and apply sharp, sudden braking when realising they are in a speed restriction.

Could Network Rail re-brief staff on the correct positioning of these boards?

**Use of limited clearance boards** - The third concern is about the use of limited clearance speed restriction boards in place of normal speed restriction boards. The reporter comments that it is common in the Ipswich and Felixstowe areas for limited clearance boards to be used as the standard when there is, in fact, no limited clearance. The reporter finds this confusing and does not understand the practice.

Could Network Rail re-brief staff as to the correct usage of different kinds of speed restriction boards?

## **Response from Network Rail**

Network Rail would like to thank the reporter for raising the above concern regarding the use of speed restriction boards. Safety is a highly important issue for Network Rail.

All the speed boards at the Ipswich depot have been checked and a number of boards were found to be damaged or dirty and these have been taken out of service. All the remaining boards have been cleaned and checked again so that they are fully reflective.

The arrangements for board positioning have been reviewed and were found to be dictated by the equipment that was available in the stores.

The continued use of ballast buckets for mounting boards has been stopped and replaced by rail-foot-clamped speed board brackets. These come in two lengths, a short one for limited clearance use and a standard length version. Staff have been briefed on when each type should be used.

An information poster has also been placed within the board storage area as a permanent reminder to staff.

Finally, staff have also been reminded that the correct erecting equipment should be used at all times.

## **40827 No access to track signal diagrams when booking T2s and T12s**

A reporter would like access to track signal diagrams. In order to book short notice track possessions, particularly T2s or T12s, contracting staff need to know which signal(s) are protecting the possession. In order to do this, without local knowledge or a site visit, staff would need to look at the track signal diagrams which detail the signal layout within a particular signal box control area, allowing staff to correctly book a possession from one signal to another.

The reporter comments that it is very difficult to gain access to these track signal diagrams and even harder to find ones that are up-to-date. This creates the potential for a possession to be booked using the wrong signal numbers and so staff working on the track would think they are protected when in fact they are not.

The reporter would like to know:

- if Network Rail have track signal diagrams for the whole network;
- how staff (both Network Rail employees and contractors) can access them; and
- if the diagrams are version controlled or updated to ensure they are accurate.

## **Response from Network Rail**

Network Rail (NR) would like to thank the reporter for raising their concern regarding access to track signal diagrams.

Signal plans are stored in an electronic document system called eB, which is managed by the Network Records Group (NRG) based in York. The response to the reporter's enquiry depends on whether they are Network Rail staff or not.

Network Rail staff can:

- Apply for access to eB (subject to authorisation) to allow on-line viewing of the plans - contact [ebqueries@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:ebqueries@networkrail.co.uk).
- Request specific signal plans via NRG – contact [ebqueries@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:ebqueries@networkrail.co.uk). Please note that a queue system is in operation. Requests for single plans will be processed in 48 hours, requests for multiple records will be subject to a 28 day service level agreement. You will need to know the name of the interlocking/signal box to find the correct signal plan.

These signal plans are controlled documents. Schemes involving re-signalling have a formal procedure to follow. Once the final signal plan is approved, the new version is supplied to NRG and updated in eB. There may sometimes be a time lag but it is a controlled process. A visual check of the actual arrangements on site is always required as a precaution.

For informal purposes NR employees can also consult the online 5 Mile Line Diagrams (5MLD) available on the Knowledge Hub under "National - General - Reports". These also contain track layouts and basic signal information but do not cover the whole network and updates are not carried out on a regular basis. They should not be relied on for possessions or any other safety related work but may be a useful source of general information.

External contractors would normally obtain plans from their Network Rail project manager, who can follow the channels described above. They can also contact NRG direct, but there is a charge for issuing drawings externally if it is for a non NR project. Over 100 external design houses have Web access to eB. Charges are published on the NR website at <http://www.networkrail.co.uk/asp/3496.aspx>.

External contractors can also get direct access to the suite of 5 Mile Line Diagrams by contacting Waterman Associates, for which a "membership" charge is made but again it should be noted that these diagrams are not under formal version control. They should not be relied on for possessions or any other safety related work but may be a useful source of general information.

Alternatively the local green zone access coordinator within each Network Rail area can assist with local information.

## **40828 Electrical contractors 'too' close to platform edge**

A reporter is querying the practice of electrical contractors working close to the platform edge to install and maintain lighting. Electrical contractors working for Network Rail are usually non-railway staff, the reporter states, and are therefore less aware of the specific risks associated with the railway's operation. The report has been prompted by recent lighting installation work witnessed by the reporter at two large stations carried out close to the platform edge.

Though station staff are responsible for the safety of people working on the platform, they are not normally briefed on the section of the *Rule Book* about using plant or equipment

when working on or near the line. Consequently, the risk is greater because they are not always fully aware of the dangers.

In particular, the reporter is concerned that platform lights are frequently being installed on the limit of the safe working distance (four feet) from the platform edge. Because scaffolding and ladders, for example, often need to be three metres tall to reach the lights, they could foul the running line if they fell.

Hence, work done in this way could import safety risk unless specific measures are taken to limit it. There is also a risk to passengers who may attempt to walk around scaffolding, bringing them closer to the platform edge. In such cases, a possession should be taken for any work with scaffolding and ladders close to the platform edge, according to the reporter.

For Network Rail:

The reporter believes Network Rail may benefit from reviewing the practice of having contractors work so close to the platform edge with ladders and scaffolding. Also, why is lighting being installed so close to the edge if it makes future maintenance more difficult? In some cases, such as at Shrewsbury, new lighting appears to have been installed closer to the platform edge than before; this means that all future maintenance work must take place closer to the edge by necessity.

For the RSSB:

The reporter would like to know whether the *Rule Book* confirms that a possession should be used where, for example, scaffolding three metres high is used just a few feet from the platform edge. Does the equipment used affect how far contractors can work from the edge?

## Response from Network Rail

Network Rail would like to thank the reporter for raising their concern regarding electrical contractors.

Network Rail mandates that safe systems of work are adopted, supported by risk assessments and that suitable controls are in place, prior to any works conducted by their staff or indeed any of our approved contractors. At no time does Network Rail permit or sanction any activity which places its staff or contractors in areas of danger by their work.

There are several standards and guidance notes which are applicable- *RT/CE/S/003 Technical Approval of Design - Construction and maintenance of Civil Engineering Infrastructure*; *GI/RT7003 Management of Construction Works in the Operational Railway Environment* and *NR/CS/CIV/044 Managing Structures Work* to name just a few. These are usually referenced in the various risk assessments; works package plans (WPP) or task briefing sheets for the work activity.

For example, when designing any new electrical schemes, the designers have a duty under the *Construction (Design and Management) Regulations (CDM) 2007* regulations to assess the suitability of the installation for future maintenance. Where the works are of a non-enhancement type, maintenance or simple renewal, then the installation is completed normally on a like-for-like basis.

There will always be exceptions, especially when works are on listed and protected structures. These are then subject to site specific instructions and controls.

On-station briefings Network Rail requests that all their staff and contractors make contact with the station manager to receive any specific visitor's briefings and emergency arrangements which the station staff have in place. Copies of Network Rail control sheets or WPP's are made available to station staff.

The safety controls instigated by the station managers other than at Network Rail managed stations, are the responsibility of the train operating company, e.g. when advertising posters have to be changed or routine maintenance of failed lighting takes place.

If the reporter observes any activity on a station platform which they feel compromises safety they should immediately bring this to the attention of the work group or a member of the station staff.

## **40833 Stressing kit not used on track welding work**

A reporter has become aware of stressing work not being completed when defective rails are replaced with new ones at Network Rail sites in east London.

Stressing is required to close the gaps in the rail which are created when old rail is removed and tension is lost in the rail. Using a tensor or stressing kit, the rail is stretched to increase tension so that it doesn't come loose in extreme weather conditions. The reporter is aware of 8mm gaps not being stressed and is concerned that the lack of stressing work could mean that there is a risk of derailment or, in extreme hot weather, the rail buckling.

The reporter believes the problem partly exists because there is not enough time to get the stressing work done within the four-hour engineering slot, when other welding work is also occurring. The reporter believes this practice has been going on for at least six months across various locations, not just in the London area.

Could Network Rail conduct investigations at their sites in east London where such work has been undertaken recently? Also, could clarification be provided about permissible lengths of gaps?

## **Response from Network Rail**

Network Rail would like to thank the reporter for raising the above concern regarding the absence of stressing with welding work and its potential implications. Safety is a highly important issue for Network Rail.

The activity of stressing rails is important as it makes sure that the rail is effectively stress-free at a designated temperature (normally 27 degrees Celsius) and when rail is first installed it is a requirement to make sure that this stress free temperature is achieved.

However, for some maintenance tasks it is permissible not to actually stress the rail when defects are removed, for example, where the actual rail temperature is at or near the required stress free temperature (so the rail is already stress free at that temperature and doesn't need tensioning). There are tolerances laid down for where this is allowed, and provided the rail is between 21 and 27 degrees Celsius it is acceptable.

Another example is where stressing is to be carried out at a later date where e.g. a broken rail has been changed. A special form (known as a "pink form") is filled in and is sent to the track section manager who will plan for that section of track to be re-stressed before the

onset of hot weather. This option is usually done over the winter months and is often used where insufficient time is available to fully stress the rail.

From the information provided by the reporter it is likely that the tasks would have generated these "pink forms" and checks will be made on the number of these submitted over the past six months. Checks will then be made on a sample of these submitted forms to check that the acceptable temperature range has been achieved and/or that re-stressing works have been carried out.

#### Final additional information

Following the issues raised by the CIRAS report, we have now completed independent checks into stress management within the Stratford, Romford and Barking supervisor depots. We can confirm there were no serious systematic failures identified, or any specific failures of a type that would support the allegations made in the report.

The depot checks included:

- use of trained and certificated staff ;
- completion of the correct certification;
- management of stress required sites (specifically where the track was disturbed but stress not maintained in the same shift); and
- retention of adequate auditable records, including use of StressRoute.

On-site checks were not completed as part of the investigation, as site staff would have automatically defaulted to the correct processes.

Based on the results of this investigation, we would suggest that the reporter may have seen rails being installed without the use of tensor equipment to maintain stress, but may not have seen or understood the post-site process of reporting the failure to manage the stress on a TEF3012 form.

As both Romford and Barking depots have a known backlog of re-stressing from this type of failure, this may have led to the impression that no further work was planned.

## 40835 S&T manuals query

A reporter has raised concerns regarding requirements listed in manuals for S&T staff.

Institute of Railway Signals Engineers (IRSE) Licence - The first issue concerns the requirement for S&T staff to be IRSE licensed, as outlined in the signal maintenance specifications (SMS). These licences must be renewed every five years through an assessment, but the reporter states that these assessments are not available and have not been so for more than a year. This means an increasing number of staff do not have a valid IRSE licence.

- Are these licences essential? If they are, can assessments be provided? If not, could this requirement be removed from the SMS?

Safety belts - The second concern relates to the requirement for S&T staff to wear safety belts and harnesses, as outlined in the 'General Instructions issued to S&T staff'. The books

state that a safety belt must be used when climbing signal posts or telegraph posts, but the reporter states that no safety belts are provided in his depot.

- As with the above concern, the reporter would like to know whether this requirement is mandatory. If yes, could all depots supply them to S&T staff? If safety belts are not mandatory, could this requirement be removed from the book?

*Independent Signal Maintenance Testing Handbook (SMTH) inspection* - The final issue also regards the SMS, which states that a person must be competent and authorised to work on specific equipment. Due to a lack of staff, the reporter is often paired with a person with no authority or competency apart from lookout and PTS, which means that the reporter has to carry out any repairs or replacement of equipment himself.

By doing the work, the reporter cannot inspect the job independently as required by the SMTH. S&T staff are increasingly working in teams of two. The reporter would ideally like to see teams consist of at least three people, two of whom should be authorised and competent.

- Is it possible for an S&T worker to carry out a job and inspect it himself independently?

Please comment.

## Response from Network Rail

Network Rail would like to thank the reporter for raising their concerns.

Network Rail is committed to IRSE licensing to demonstrate competence in addition to its own assessment in the line (AiTL) process. In order to reduce duplication between the two systems we have been working closely with the IRSE to agree a way of using the evidence gathered for AiTL as the basis for an IRSE licence. Agreement has been reached and trials are underway to confirm that the new method is both efficient and effective. In the meantime, Network Rail has a temporary non-compliance in place against the requirement in the SMS to demonstrate staff competence by means of AiTL only. The S&T Manual will be revised when the trials have been completed.

Safety harnesses are required where the person working at height cannot maintain three points of contact on the ladder or structure whilst undertaking their work or no guard rails or safety barriers/cages are installed at platforms at height. Network Rail are currently reviewing its controls for working at height on signalling equipment and a working at height policy is being drafted for issue in December 2009. Network Rail will review the SMS in line with the new policy to check its requirements have been included, and that requirements are correctly implemented for staff.

The reporter is correct that the SMTH tester should not carry out work they are testing unless the test plan clearly states "independence exempted". Anyone who works on the signal infrastructure has to be competent under the Network Rail AiTL process. Therefore in a two-man team both would need to be competent to undertake corrective and preventive maintenance of the particular asset, however only one would need to hold SMTH competence. This allows one person to locate and diagnose the fault; a second person to affect a repair and then the first to independently test the asset in accordance with the SMTH and the relevant SMS.

## **40842 Pandrol Clip extraction**

The extraction of Pandrol clips is of concern to a reporter.

Over time, it has become normal practice to remove Pandrol clips with a hammer and use a pan-puller to put the clip back in, according to the reporter. Using a hammer to extract a clip is unsafe – the clips are spring loaded and they can fly out of the hold and hit or injure a worker. Also, when removing the clips, there is little control over the hammer and the reporter fails to see how a suggestion made by a manager of “putting your foot over it” when doing this is any safer, even with safety boots on.

This normal working practice of using a hammer contradicts what is learnt by new trainees on track induction courses – the tool that should be used when extracting Pandrol clips is a pan-puller and it is only if the clips are too tight or seize to move that a hammer should be used.

The reporter would like Network Rail to clarify the correct procedure to extract Pandrol clips and what tools should be used when engaged in this work?

### **Response from Network Rail**

Network Rail would like to thank the reporter for raising their concern regarding the process for removing Pandrol clips.

The process for removing Pandrol clips is that they should be extracted from the baseplate or housing using a 'Panpuller'. You should always take care with fastenings which are tight as they can sometimes release suddenly causing you to lose your balance. If the clip is tight or seized you may use a hammer or bar to loosen the clip by gently giving the clip a tap with your foot resting over the clip.

You should only ever use a hammer or bar to loosen Pandrol clips as per the agreed safe method of work.

All staff are asked to take additional care as clips can, without warning, fly out of their housings uncontrollably and may cause injury if you use a hammer or bar to remove the clip.

## **40838 Access gate left open**

A concerned reporter has observed that an access gate was left open by the manned signal box on Woodbury Lane, near Norton Juxta Kempsey in Worcestershire, potentially giving the public access to the railway. The reporter believes this might be a reoccurring thing and suggests that a reminder that the gate is to be kept shut could be put in this signal box.

Could this be arranged?

### **Response from Network Rail**

Network Rail would like to thank the reporter for raising their concern regarding the Woodbury Lane access gate.

Upon receipt of the CIRAS report, arrangements were made to inspect the access gate. On this occasion the gate was found to be secured. Unfortunately signallers would not be aware if the gate had been left open as it is not within sight of the signal box. Security of operational locations form part of the regular inspections undertaken by the local manager and all staff

are aware of the importance in keeping access points to the railway secure. We have arranged for all local staff to be rebriefed and relevant reminder signs to be installed.

Network Rail encourage all railway staff to report open access gates immediately to a member of Network Rail staff or via recognised railway company hazard reporting processes so that the matter can be investigated promptly and railway boundaries secured as a matter of urgency.

## **40841 'Rough riding' experienced over points near Tyseley station**

A reporter is concerned about 'rough riding' on crossover points near Tyseley station, between Birmingham Moor Street and Acocks Green. The reporter comments that in January 2008 signalling arrangements were changed and a new set of crossover points came into use to enable trains on a fast service to pass through platforms one and two at Tyseley station.

The line speed at these crossover points is 60mph, which the reporter believes is the reason for the 'rough riding'.

The reporter comments that the trains rocks quite severely from side to side, as a result both staff and passengers get thrown around, which could lead to a serious injury.

Could Network Rail comment on the possibility of reducing the speed over these crossover points to 40 or 50mph?

### **Response from Network Rail**

Network Rail would like to thank the reporter for raising their concern regarding the rough ride over points near Tyseley station.

The section of track referred to was installed as part of the Tyseley re-modelling work in late 2007/ early 2008. We acknowledge that the ride could be improved, and have engineering work planned there in 11 weeks time. The timescale is dictated by the availability of specialised equipment to carry out the necessary track geometry adjustments.

The track is designed for 60mph and any reduction in speed, if required, is based on scientific data. The scientific data is produced by the rigorous track analysis equipment that runs over this portion of line on a four weekly cycle. This information is scrutinised by experienced engineers and used to determine where work may be required currently or in the future, or if immediate action is required to maintain safety, i.e. a reduction in the running speed of the trains. The information for the section of railway in question has shown a deterioration over the last eight weeks. However, currently the figures are a long way from causing concern, and subsequently there is no requirement to reduce the line speed.

Other inspection methods include a weekly foot-patrol and a monthly cab ride; once again carried out by experienced engineering staff. They also cross-reference the outputs of the track geometry analysis equipment with their own findings so that nothing is missed or overlooked.

Once the planned work has been completed, the next run of scientific data will be analysed to confirm its effectiveness.

## 40844 No lights at Poole sidings

A reporter is concerned that there are no working lights at Poole sidings. This has been ongoing for at least 18 months and though Network Rail have acknowledged that it is their responsibility to fix the lights, nothing seems to have happened as yet.

Poole sidings are used at night by drivers and cleaners when trains are stabled. The reporter states that there is a significant slip, trip and fall risk due to the lack of light and that a person could potentially fall onto the tracks.

The reporter would like to know:

- why there has been such a delay in fixing the lights; and
- whether the lights will be repaired in the near future?

## Response from Network Rail

Network Rail would like to thank the reporter for raising their concern regarding the lighting at Poole sidings.

The lighting had originally been switched off and isolated by our property maintenance contractor, who had been incorrectly called to a fault with the lights. They carried out electrical testing and considered that the lighting electrical test results were poor and isolated the supply, leaving no lights.

Eastleigh E&P were notified on 26 August 2009 (fault no 164043) and we investigated and made repairs to the light fittings returning the majority of the lights to working order by the 10 September 2009 (fault closed 15 September 2009.) We are currently arranging for the lighting levels to be checked to ensure the installation complies with the standard for walkway lighting. The fittings that are not working are so corroded that it is not possible to prevent water ingress; we are however trying to source suitable fittings as a replacement until renewal.

Currently we have prioritised the working light units to the concrete raised walkway as this is the safe walkway used consistently by drivers.

The lighting in Poole sidings was originally reported as being in poor condition in 2005 and placed on the asset renewal list and kept operational since that date. The asset is now being processed for renewal in 2010.

## 40823 Training and competency of lookouts

A reporter has highlighted concerns about insufficient track experience newly trained lookouts possess along the western Paddington-Acton route.

The reporter is aware of some agencies training office-based staff, who hold PTS, as lookouts. A COSS may not have any knowledge on how much track experience these lookouts have and are therefore being extra vigilant to avoid near misses. The reporter wonders if this could have been a cause for the rise in near misses reported earlier in the year.

The reporter highlights a standard set by Network Rail – ‘NR/L2/CTM/021, [issue 2, page 12]’ – to be a lookout, staff need only a PTS and to be a minimum of 18 years old. The reporter worries that there are no requirements for track experience in red or green zones before staff can commence lookout duties.

The reporter would like to see the standards reviewed to mandate an appropriate minimum requirement period of track experience for lookouts.

Please comment.

## Response from Network Rail

Network Rail would like to thank the reporter for raising the above concern regarding the training and competency of lookouts. Safety is a highly important issue for Network Rail.

To act as a lookout a person must be assessed as competent and carry out the role on a regular basis to maintain the competence. The occasions the lookout carries out the duties are recorded in a work experience book.

If the controller of site safety (COSS) has any doubts over the lookout’s experience or competence they can delay or stop the work and then select another certified competent person to act as the lookout.

The COSS is required to continually monitor the safe system of work being used and make the necessary changes to the safe system as appropriate.

The standard *NR/L2/CTM/021* is due to be reviewed, starting in December 2009. The standard will be reviewed by industry experts with the competencies covered within the standard and the concerns raised by the reporter will be discussed as part of that review process.

## 40843 Staff under pressure due to short possessions

A reporter is concerned about the pressure being placed on staff due to the short time periods allowed for possessions. Staff, especially PICOPs and ESs in the south east region (excluding East Anglia), are experiencing pressure from signalling staff to hand back possessions early or on time, despite final safety checks not being made. This could lead to a serious incident on or around the track.

The reporter feels that this pressure is increased as sufficient time is not allocated for the work that needs to be carried out during the possessions. The reporter gives the example of five hours worth of work being done in a three hour possession, not leaving any leeway for problems that may arise and cause the possession to overrun. The reporter is also concerned that the number of machine movements being carried out in these short possessions is dangerous and a major cause of delays.

Could Network Rail review the planning of possessions and explain the process behind deciding how much time is allocated to each possession?

## Response from Network Rail

Network Rail would like to thank the reporter for raising their concerns regarding possession pressures and the potential consequences. Safety is highly important to Network Rail.

Network Rail planners plan possessions with the assistance of other relevant departments and the specialist contractors for the work concerned. They use a work planning guide to help them decide how long it will take to complete the work.

The number of on-track machines allowed in a possession of the line is decided at the planning stage and this includes consideration of the safety of the people and the work involved. It is the role of the machine controller who accompanies the on-track machines to make sure that any movement or task the machine is to carry out is done safely. This includes telling the people working what is to happen and to make sure they are not near the machine when it does its movement or task. A risk assessment and method statement is also mandated for the safety of those involved.

It is the responsibility of the person in charge of possession (PICOP) to decide when a possession of the line should be given up.

The PICOP will base this on the confirmation from the engineering supervisor (ES) that the work has been completed and that it is safe to give the railway back for the running of trains.

## **40845 Agency staff fear raising safety concerns**

An experienced COSS fears raising legitimate safety concerns because client contractors often ask for agency staff to be replaced if they are perceived as obstructionist.

The COSS, working for an agency himself, says that business pressure sometimes overrides the need to carry out work safely. Real life examples that have been raised on site by COSS agency staff - who have then either found themselves quickly replaced or simply not invited back to work for a particular client - include:

- requesting someone to stop working when leaning over unsafely from the top of a ladder;
- querying site paperwork with no track diagrams;
- querying the lack of pre-possession meetings; and
- expecting COSSs to leave a site unattended for a while.

The reporter is concerned that despite the promotion of a 'no blame' safety culture, experienced agency staff committed to following the correct rules and procedures can find themselves in a dilemma. A client contractor can effectively remove a member of agency staff at his discretion, a reality that may frequently inhibit the reporting of genuine safety concerns. And there is little or no protection for safety-minded individuals when raising a concern elicits a negative reaction simply because it comes from a member of agency staff.

The reporter suggests that this is a common problem and asks that Network Rail consider the implications where client contractors work with agencies. Stopping work on safety grounds is far more difficult to do as a member of agency staff.

He poses the following questions:

- What should agency staff do if they have a real-time safety concern to raise about work being carried out on a client contractor's site, and are unable to speak directly to the client about it?

- In the best interests of safety, can any reassurance be given that raising such a concern won't affect future employment prospects?

## Response from Network Rail

Network Rail would like to thank the reporter for raising these concerns.

If anyone has a genuine concern for staff and/or infrastructure safety, and is unwilling to raise with his or her employer or the site management staff of a particular project, they should use CIRAS or the whistleblowers hotline.

However, any issues which affect the safety of the line that need to be addressed immediately should be progressed through the signaller and route control.

The point the reporter makes regarding assurances about future employment is difficult for Network Rail to respond to as Network Rail isn't the direct employer in circumstances where agency staff are involved.

Suffice to say that Network Rail encourages all contract staff to adopt an open and honest reporting policy. This in turn ultimately leads to an improved safety culture across the business. This is useful for best practices to be observed and shared and indeed for poor practices to be highlighted and eliminated.

That said, if the reporter knows of any specific instance where a member of staff has been disciplined or prevented from working for raising safety concerns or if a member of staff has been told to ignore any unsafe practices then Network Rail would like to know and would certainly investigate these thoroughly.

## 40855 Sectional appendices in SSWOPS out of date

A reporter has raised concerns over the sectional appendices included in the safe system of working planning systems (SSWOPS) packs, which are often showing the wrong information because they are not up to date.

Sectional appendices have been found to be out of date, some as many as five or six years, which means workers on site might not have the correct safety critical information available. Examples of incorrect information in the SSWOPS include line speed, actual lines missing and information indicating that lines are unidirectional when in fact they are bidirectional. In many cases such shortcomings will be spotted, but if they are not, it could have serious consequences: there might not be enough lookouts present or they might not be placed correctly; workers could be surprised by the speed of approaching trains and workers could be looking out for trains in the wrong direction, to name a few examples.

The reporter is aware that this has been an issue in the Preston and Carlisle areas, as well as in other locations across Cumbria, but believes it is a nationwide issue which could affect all SSWOPS packs being made. This problem has been reported to management repeatedly, but continues.

The reporter would like to see Network Rail ensure that all sectional appendices included in SSWOPS packs are accurate and up to date. Could this be done?

## Response from Network Rail

Network Rail would like to thank the reporter for raising their concern

We are continually striving to improve the quality of information available to our staff. SOWPS takes the *National Electronic Sectional Appendix (NESA)* as the master for the sectional appendix diagrams (also containing ELRs and mileages). The application support group look after the process of updating the sectional appendix.

When a change is made to NESA it is published and application support update the image or information online. This is done manually by the team, rather than by any automated upload procedure. Any images or information which are found by the users to be out of date or inaccurate should be reported immediately through your line manager.

If a call is raised then the national specialist team at HQ check the content of the sectional appendix and pass the enquiry either to NESA or directly to the IM application support group for update.

We would like to stress the importance to everyone of making your line manager or supervisor aware of any error in the paperwork provided so that we can continue to improve the quality of information we provide.

## **40863 Signalling managers 'inexperienced'**

According to one reporter some signalling managers do not have sufficient experience to adequately advise and manage signallers. This has been noted in the London north eastern region, but could very well be a nationwide issue.

Until a few years ago, signalling managers had themselves been signallers for many years prior to being made managers, and so had a very good grasp of the complexities of the job.

According to the reporter, more and more managers now come from other areas of the industry, and are simply given the basic eight week training course which all signallers must attend. However, they are not required to train any further or to actually run a signal box on their own. This concerns the reporter, as inexperienced signallers will look to their managers for advice on the job and managers might have less experience than the people they are supposed to advise. This could eventually lead to a signaller receiving and carrying out a bad instruction, resulting in an incident.

The reporter is aware of instances where signallers have questioned advice from managers which proved to be incorrect; however not all signallers are likely to do this.

This issue also applies to other jobs, such as p-way and S&T, according to the reporter. There seems to be a trend of increasingly employing managers who have little practical experience of the job of the people they are supervising.

The reporter would like to see Network Rail make it a requirement of signalling managers to have extensive experience of working as a signaller.

Please comment.

## **Response from Network Rail**

Network Rail would like to thank the reporter for raising their concerns.

It is not a new issue that the recruitment of local operations managers (formally signalling managers) has been from a resource pool of lesser experienced railway staff than what would have been considered normal some years ago. What has not changed though is the sensible level of competence expected of that said line manager when they were deemed competent to take on the role.

Local operations managers are not appointed based solely on signalling experience but a balanced set of criteria incorporating their past experience, attitude, engagement, skill sets, interpersonal skills and aptitude.

Newly appointed local operations managers will have a plan which will consider their current level of underpinning knowledge for the role and be adapted to make certain that at the planned end of their training, they possess the relevant standard of competence. This will be tested by their operations manager and sometimes the area signalling inspector.

It is fair to say that there will always be a difference in underpinning knowledge due to experience. Possible errors administered by the line manager can happen also between signaller and signaller yet what is important is the line manager having the aptitude to think safely, search for the right answers, and use the team's knowledge to aid a clear understanding. For example, not making an assumption, asking for assistance from possibly another source, and where relevant, using the *Worksafe Procedure* to manage the safety of the network.

It is expected of all local operations manager that they do possess the competence to work the signal boxes they manage or a percentage of them. Where they may not possess the competence now, they will be working towards it.

## **40864 Foul smell at Cowlairs maintenance depot**

A reporter raises an issue about a foul smell in the changing area at Cowlairs maintenance depot, Glasgow. Using the area is very unpleasant as the stench can be sickening. The depot has had this problem since it was built last year and is of common concern to those using the area. Although various reasons have been given as to why the problem exists, a solution has not yet been found.

Could Network Rail determine what is causing the unpleasant smell and take steps to resolve the problem?

### **Response from Network Rail**

Network Rail would like to thank the reporter for bringing their concerns to our attention. This has been a problem with a smell coming from certain drains since the building became occupied and one we have been dealing with. This report was raised by staff that have only just been re-located at Cowlairs and are maybe not aware of the work we have been doing to address this issue.

The issues emanate from the 'wet floor' drainage installed in what is in effect a 'dry room'. Consequently the "U bend", which is designed to constantly have water in it, to act as a trap to stop any smells coming out, dries out and a smell emanates from the drain.

It is incumbent on the cleaning staff pouring disinfectant down the drains every other day, which is now happening and the smell has disappeared.

A long term solution of capping the drains is being investigated but in the meantime staff should report any smell issues to the facilities management team.

## **40757 Double and treble shifting for maintenance operators in Scotland**

Maintenance operators in Scotland being asked to work shifts consecutively is a concern for a reporter - this has been the subject of several previous CIRAS reports.

Staff are reported to be working day shifts on construction sites and going straight on to railway sites at night. The reporter believes that this not being detected because there is a separate system for construction and railway timesheets. Working excessive hours is in conflict with the *Working Time Directive* which states that workers should be getting an adequate break between shifts.

The reporter comments that staff generally feel unable to refuse. Working excessive hours increases the likelihood of a safety critical mistake through lack of rest – especially if staff are operating heavy machinery.

Would the contractor:

- ensure that staff are receiving suitable periods of rest between shifts in line with the *Working Time Directive*; and
- consider a comparative audit of construction and rail timesheets to investigate whether there are any irregularities?

### **Response from a subcontractor**

This company well understands the rules regarding working hours and the necessary breaks required between shifts. Accordingly, it has robust systems in place at all depots nationwide, including Scotland, to ensure that these rules are observed.

All of its depots are internally audited a minimum of three times each year by the internal compliance department to confirm that systems are being followed. Additionally the depots are regularly audited by Network Rail and its main contractors to establish that rules are being observed.

Network Rail carried out a very detailed audit of Scotland depot earlier this year, and expressed no major concerns.

At this time in the economic cycle we have had to make redundant a large number of skilled operators and are endeavouring to provide all the remaining operators employed by us with sufficient work. This means spreading the available workbank more thinly over the remaining workforce. We are having to ask machine operators to work LESS hours than previously. There is categorically NO pressure on anyone to work MORE hours, and certainly none whatsoever to work excessive hours.

The rail division and construction operation work closely together to best utilise machine operators and work within the working hour rules.

Our internal audits undertaken by our Compliance Division and the external audits undertaken by Network Rail and the main contractors have not revealed any issues. Our

managers in the Scotland depot are not aware of any issues, nor of any machine operators raising such issues.

We will continue to roster our machine operators within the working hour rules.

Any machine operators who have any concerns should raise them with their line managers.

Note:

We have successfully introduced a “right to refuse to work” policy for all our machine operators which ensures that they can refuse to work if they are asked to do anything which they consider unsafe. This has been supported by ALL our customers without exception, and has led to a number of instances where customers have changed work methods with absolutely no negatives being attached to the machine operator who raised the issue.

## **40868 Staff operating manually controlled gates without PPE**

A reporter notes that some signallers on the Southeastern network are not wearing PPE when opening and closing manually operated crossing gates (MCGs). The reporter has witnessed staff not wearing black boots or high visibility clothing, making it difficult to see these operators in the dark. Also, staff operating these gates without PPE might not be recognised as being a member of railway staff but possibly be carrying out suspicious activity.

The reporter would like to know if signallers are required to wear PPE when operating level crossing gates. If they are, could Network Rail ensure all signallers operating MCGs are briefed and wear the correct PPE?

### **Response from Network Rail**

Network Rail would like to thank the reporter for bringing their concerns to our attention. There are specific requirements for persons to wear PPE when working manual crossing gates; whether they be a signaller or a full time crossing keeper.

Network Rail has a policy in place requiring staff working on or near the line to wear a high visibility jacket (HVV) and trousers together with safety footwear and an appropriately coloured hard hat denoting their experience. However, Network Rail recognises that the environment and underfoot conditions that a person working a set of manual gates is different from that of staff working trackside.

This is reflected in the minimum PPE requirement, which for persons operating manual gates is the wearing of a HVV jacket only.

Network Rail has a process in place which requires the line manager to visit each individual he/she manages on a frequent basis to confirm compliance with all rules and regulations, including adherence to the PPE policy. However, a briefing has been circulated to all locations which have manually operated gates within the Kent route reminding staff of the PPE requirements.

The reporter is encouraged to report any deviation from this policy to their line manager so that the appropriate action can be taken.

## 40859 High workload at Green Oak Goit crossing

A reporter is concerned that the increase in road traffic over Green Oak Goit crossing, coupled with the current operations system, has increased the workload of both crossing keepers and signallers to the point where an accident is becoming more and more likely.

The crossing used to be protected by indicators, which told the crossing keeper whether a train was approaching. About two years ago concerns were raised over whether the indicators were working properly, and as a result of this it was decided that crossing keepers should telephone the signaller at Gilberdyke signal box and ask for protection whenever a vehicle wanted to cross. This was supposed to be a temporary measure, expected to last six months, but more than two years later this system is still in place. Repeater indicators were supposed to be installed for the crossing keepers, but this has not happened.

In the past year the volume of traffic has increased exponentially according to the reporter, seemingly because drivers are frequently being directed over the crossing by their GPS systems and sat navs. This means that the crossing keeper has to call the signaller 10 to 15 times per hour, where it used to be only a couple of times per hour.

This puts a lot of stress on both parties, but particularly on the signaller who also has to monitor other crossings in the area.

The reporter is concerned that this situation has an impact on the quality of the safety critical conversations between crossing keeper and signaller. The large number of calls can lead to complacency and vital information might be missed or not communicated correctly. This is especially dangerous when two trains are approaching the crossing as there is no track circuit on this piece of line; the signaller relies on the crossing keeper to know when both trains have cleared the crossing, which leaves wide room for human error.

Would Network Rail consider the following points?

- The reporter suggests that Green Oak Goit crossing should be reassessed to determine whether the arrangements which were put in place two years ago are still safe, considering the significant increase in traffic which has occurred in the meantime.
- Also, the reporter would like to know whether a decision will be made to install repeater indicators, or any other kind of indicators, at Green Oak Goit so that crossing keepers no longer have to call the signaller before letting people cross.
- If indicators will not be installed in the foreseeable future, the reporter would like to see Network Rail assess the workload of both crossing keepers at Green Oak Goit and signallers in Gilberdyke signal box.

## Response from Network Rail

Network Rail would like to thank the reporter for raising their concerns.

Some of the information in the report is inaccurate so we would like to correct that. The working at Green Oak Goit came about because of a near miss involving a member of staff and the indicators were never proved to not be working correctly. However, it was deemed necessary to introduce the current method of working because the crossing keeper on duty could not see a change in the indicators from the crossing.

With regard to the traffic over the crossing, there are times of the day when traffic is busy but these are the usual times when people are going to work/school and returning from work/school when there is the potential for 10-15 swings in an hour. However, the majority of the time the amount of swings will be less than half that number per hour.

The signaller at Gilberdyke gives protection to Green Oak Goit once all trains have passed the crossing and it is clear for people to cross as per the instructions for all user worked crossings. They do not rely on the crossing keepers to tell them when the train has passed, and they do have indications on their diagram to show them when a train has passed clear.

The working at Green Oak Goit has been kept under review since the event and numerous things have been done to try and solve the issue. The crossing has been risk assessed by two different people to check that the method of work was safe and sufficient. We have arranged for the crossing (and signal boxes either side) to be assessed twice by the signalling design team to find a solution to the problem. After several options and quotations it was decided that repeating indicators would be installed on the crossing in order to remove the need to ring Gilberdyke for protection. Repeating indicators have been sourced and are awaiting design and installation.

We hope this goes some way to answer the concerns of the reporter.

## **40865 Lack of fire instructions and briefings and access to the railway telephone**

A reporter has contacted CIRAS with concerns about the lack of fire instructions and briefings for a particular area of Waterloo station and access to the railway telephone.

Fire instructions and briefings - The area in question is where South West Trains installed new ticket barriers, near the subway entrance/exit to the underground part of the station.

Since the installation of these barriers the reporter comments that the fire procedures on the 'paid' side of the barriers have changed and as a result new fire instructions and briefings need to be provided. The reporter is aware that management said they would provide this information but have yet to do so. Further to this, there are no signs in the subway area to indicate the nearest emergency exit.

The reporter is concerned that if the fire alarm were to sound staff could direct people incorrectly, possibly back into a fire, as they have received no instructions or briefings as to the evacuation procedures for that area.

- Could South West Trains ensure that staff receive the necessary fire instructions and briefings?
- Could Network Rail ensure that the area has adequate emergency exit signs?

Access to railway telephone - Another issue raised by the reporter is a lack of access to a railway telephone in the subway area. Whilst in this area, staff are unable to use their mobile phones and the signal to their radios is intermittent, making it difficult to contact anyone if an emergency situation were to arise. The reporter comments that there is a railway telephone in the subway area but that it is locked away and no one has a key.

- Could Network Rail explain why this telephone is out of use and comment on the possibility of providing staff with a key?

## Response from Network Rail

Network Rail would like to thank the reporter for raising their concerns regarding fire exit signage and access to railway telephones.

Our senior fire safety engineer has confirmed that emergency signage in the 'paid' side of the milk arch was not required as "way out" signage is sufficient. In the event of a fire the most appropriate exit would be determined by the location of the fire. Therefore, putting up fire exit signs could be confusing. An inspection of the areas has however brought to our attention that signage on the 'unpaid' side may not be sufficient. A further inspection will be undertaken with the senior fire safety engineer shortly to agree what additional signage is required.

There are two telephones located in the peak hour subway (PHS). They are within the gate line assistant points (staff huts) and therefore access is determined by South West Trains.

## 40789 Lack of sun visors on rail grinding machines

A reporter has contacted CIRAS over the lack of sun visors in the cab of switch and crossing rail grinding machines, which are owned by Harsco Rail and used nationally by Network Rail. There are five of these machines in total.

The machines function as a train when going to or from a work site, and the lack of a sun visor means that drivers can get dazzled by the sun, which makes it difficult for them to read signals and look out for people on the tracks. According to the reporter, this issue has been raised several times over four years, but a resolution is still to be found.

Can a sun visor or blind be installed on these rail grinding machines?

## Response from Harsco

We thank the reporter for raising this issue and would like to point out that Harsco do not own the grinding machines. Harsco operate these machines under contract to the owners Network Rail.

Harsco and Network Rail are aware of this issue and are jointly working on providing an effective solution. Harsco are in the process of finalising a proposal for the fitment of sun blinds. This proposal will be submitted to Network Rail for review and approval before the end of November.

## 40862 LUL driver calls to NR signaller 'go unanswered'

London Underground (LUL) drivers on the Bakerloo line who need to speak over the Connect Two radio system to the Network Rail (NR) signal box at Wembley are finding that their calls sometimes go unanswered. The infrastructure, which is shared between Queens Park and Harrow and Wealdstone, is controlled by NR. The reporter says this issue has been causing some concern amongst drivers for the past six months.

Drivers may need to speak with the signaller to convey safety critical information - such as the presence of an obstruction on the line, a fire, or anything else that may require

immediate action. There are electrified overhead lines carrying 25,000 volts, as well as conductor rails in this area. Though signal post telephones (SPTs) can also be used to communicate, these are not always ideally placed if there is an incident.

The reporter understands that these unanswered calls are logged somewhere by LUL, but are they being logged anywhere by NR? It is acknowledged by the reporter that the workload in the signal box may be intense at times, and that there may be other emergencies to attend to at the time of a call. It is suggested that LUL work with NR to resolve this issue. Perhaps some performance indicators could be put in place to help ensure calls are always answered promptly.

Please comment.

## **Response from Network Rail**

Network Rail would like to thank the reporter for bring their concerns to our attention. Connect Radio was installed by London Underground (LUL) twelve months ago, prior to this signal post telephones (SPTs) were used as the main form of communication between LUL driver's and the signalling staff within Wembley SCC. These are still in situ and can be used as an alternative to the Connect radio system which is maintained by LUL and not Network Rail.

From discussions between Network Rail and LUL we have identified that the situation of unanswered calls may have happened during major service disruption which caused a large volume of telephone calls. We believe this to be no different to any other panel/workstation in a signal box which could have potentially a large amount of phone calls coming through during disruption.

With reference to the safety concerns about making emergency calls, the Connect system has a 'mayday' facility. If the driver operated the mayday facility this will then cut all other Connect radio communications off and the signaller will answer the mayday call immediately as per instructions and training.

We will continue to work with LUL to monitor the use of the Connect radio system to avoid as far as possible situations where calls received from driver's go unanswered. The signalling staff in Wembley SCC have all been re-briefed on the requirements to try and respond to calls as promptly as possible.

## **Response from LUL**

The issue of Bakerloo line train operators calls, made on the Connect system, not being answered by the Network Rail signal box at Wembley has been, and continues to be raised with the Network Rail signal box manager by the LUL service control manager. LUL service control also maintains a log of calls missed by the Wembley signal box.

At a recent JDG meeting (held 20/11/09) between Network Rail (NR), London Underground Limited (LUL) and London Overground Rail Operations Limited, the item was raised and discussed. Actions were agreed to ensure a full understanding of the issue. Once the root cause of the calls not being answered by the Wembley signal box is identified (i.e. technical or human factors) a plan of action to resolve will be agreed by all parties and tracked to completion.