



# the update

keeping CIRAS reps informed

Issue: 2  
July 2009

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## Fancy yourself as a CIRAS researcher?

The CIRAS Research Team have an interesting, but challenging job. They receive the initial contact from rail workers with safety concerns. The researchers call the reporters back at a convenient time – always when they're away from the workplace – and take the full details of the concern in an in-depth interview.



From the information taken in the interview the researcher has to assess whether it would be a report CIRAS could progress. Reports could be rejected for a number of reasons - for example, we can't progress reports that are about real-time issues, personal grievances or where confidentiality can't be guaranteed. At the autumn reps' meeting in November we will be giving attendees the opportunity to assess fictitious CIRAS reports and decide if they would progress it or not. This will be an interesting exercise for you, the reps, and your responses will be of great value to CIRAS.

# 0800 4 101 101 - can you remember?

Those of you who attended the spring reps' meetings in June will remember being given a memory test. Could you remember the number **0800 4 101 101**? It was wonderful news that it proved to be memorable – this is because we were testing the new CIRAS freephone number. It had been pointed out by some, including the chief executive of Network Rail, Iain Coucher, that the current number was hard to remember. We rose to the challenge and, with much hard work – sourcing a catchy telephone number that isn't already in use is much more difficult than you might imagine – we have triumphed.

The new freephone number – **0800 4 101 101** – will be launched in September and we need your help to ensure maximum coverage within the industry. So if you can help to arrange an article in your company newsletter or on your intranet, please email [clare.alder@ciras.org.uk](mailto:clare.alder@ciras.org.uk). Iain Coucher has kindly offered to include our new number on their sentinel cards. If your company could do something similar



please let us know. Merchandise featuring the new freephone number (for those of you who

“**Network Rail has agreed to include the number on their sentinel cards**”

don't yet know it, it's **0800 4 101 101!**) will also be available. Items include posters, leaflets, contact us cards, pens, wallets and mugs. If you would like to receive any of the above merchandise – free of

charge – please email [clare.alder@ciras.org.uk](mailto:clare.alder@ciras.org.uk) specifying your preferred items and quantities. Please note that maximum numbers apply.

The current freephone number will continue to operate in parallel for at least 12 months.

So remind me, what's the new freephone number?

**0800 4 101 101 0800 4 101 101 0800 4 101 101 0800 4 101 101**



## Dates you won't want to miss!

We hope to see you at the autumn reps' meetings in November.

Remember, if you are unable to attend please feel free to send a colleague in your place.

### Autumn Reps' Meetings

**London - Wednesday 25 November, Hilton Hotel Paddington**

**York - Thursday 26 November, Royal York Hotel, York**

## UPDATE: Spring reps' meeting

The new-look format of the CIRAS reps' meetings proved to be a success, with around **double the number of reps attending these meetings compared to the last meeting in December.**



*The London meeting was fully booked!*

Maurice Wilsdon, Head of CIRAS, opened the meeting by outlining CIRAS's role within the industry. Collin Carr, Operations Manager, followed by posing questions to attendees resulting in an engaging discussion about interesting, and it turns out surprising, facts about CIRAS. For example, did

“ **CIRAS receives almost 600 contacts each year, 55% of which are processed** ”

you know that CIRAS receives almost 600 contacts each year, 55 per cent of which are processed as reports? And that 83 per cent of the reports processed have already been reported through internal company channels first? We looked at the three job categories that reported the most in 2008 along with the three that reported least. In York, one rep asked whether CIRAS records the job categories of those who contact CIRAS, but whose reports cannot be progressed. This isn't information CIRAS has currently been capturing, but we are exploring how we can expand on the data we already record - expect an update at the autumn meetings. Collin ended by asking the reps to memorise a number - **0800 4 101 101**.

Chris Langer, Senior Researcher, then took centre stage to update reps on activity from

the research office - the hub of CIRAS. A group exercise followed, with each group looking at a fictitious report and placing themselves in the role of the safety manager. We asked what each group thought the level of risk was - high, medium or low; what action they would take; and how useful they thought the report was.

It was interesting to find that the perceived level of risk was varied, highlighting the challenge of interpreting each report. However, there was agreement that enough information had been provided in order to resolve the issue - this is a difficulty facing the Research Team who must maintain the



*Some of the reps at York*

reporter's confidentiality whilst providing the company with enough information to investigate and, possibly, act on. The feedback on this exercise was very positive, and we're already looking forward to the autumn meetings when we will ask you to put yourselves in the shoes of a CIRAS researcher.

After an opportunity to network over lunch, Clare Alder, Communications Manager, updated the reps on the latest developments including the Ipsos MORI research. Conducted in autumn 2008, the outcome has guided CIRAS in its one year communications strategy. We hope the results are already apparent.

“ **the new CIRAS freephone number had passed the test!** ”

The reps were asked if they could remember the number that Collin had set as a memory test earlier in the day - thankfully greeted with a chorus of **0800 4 101 101** - the new CIRAS freephone number had passed the test. Thank you to everyone who attended the meetings, your contribution is valuable to both CIRAS and your fellow reps, and we look forward to seeing you in November.

**Presenting and promoting**

### Connecting is key

CIRAS is keen to work with your companies in promoting workplace safety. If you would like a member of the CIRAS team to speak at your safety forums, or if you would like CIRAS promotional merchandise (including posters, information leaflets and pens), please email [clare.alder@ciras.org.uk](mailto:clare.alder@ciras.org.uk). Additionally, if you have an intranet or staff publication, we would very much like the opportunity to speak to your colleagues through links from the staff intranet or an article in the staff magazine. Again, please contact Clare Alder to discuss the possibilities.

info

**Catch the latest**

**news**

**Exhibiting**

CIRAS exhibited at the London Underground Health, Safety and Environment Conference on 8 June. A valuable exercise for CIRAS, we met many LUL staff and, as well as giving out merchandise and 'contact us' cards, we also answered many questions about the CIRAS service.

Another event CIRAS exhibited at was the National Operational Risk Conference in London on 7 July. Thank you for visiting our stand – we enjoyed meeting you, answering your questions and talking to you about how we can work together.

**All change**

Danielle Jones, member of the CIRAS research team, has now gone on maternity leave – best wishes to Danielle for her forthcoming role as Mum! Until Danielle returns we are joined by Susie Beevor, who has previously worked in the CIRAS Research Team as Research Assistant.



In case you haven't already heard, the new CIRAS freephone number **0800 4 101 101** will be launched in September. The current number will continue to run in parallel for at least 12 months.

**LATEST: Success stories**

**Emergency phones in the Stansted airport tunnel repaired**

Concerns were raised about the safety of train staff and passengers due to defective emergency telephones in the Stansted airport tunnel. It was reported that over 70 per cent of these emergency telephones were not working and this was felt to be a serious safety issue. A train was recently brought to a standstill in the tunnel and the reporter was concerned that in a case of emergency, a driver would have to spend much more time

than necessary finding a working emergency telephone to contact a signaller. The reporter was concerned that this could mean that passenger safety was being put at risk. Network Rail clarified the procedures in place to inform drivers of defective emergency telephones and explained that an investigation of this incident was underway. Additionally, Network Rail reported that all 18 telephones have been

repaired. A project to replace all the existing telephones, cabling and associated assets is planned to be complete by autumn 2009.

**“ Network Rail reported that all 18 telephones have been repaired ”**

**Risk assessment reviewed**

A reporter had concerns over Southeastern's policy of banning the use of varifocal lenses. This meant some staff had to wear bifocals even though they found them problematic, because the line across the lens causes a blind spot. This blind spot resulted in staff having to peer over the top of the glasses which makes wearing them futile. Wearers also had to tread carefully when walking down stairs at a station or boarding and alighting, especially in an emergency situation when they would have to react quickly. The reporter stated that wearing bifocals or varifocals is dependent on individual needs and asked if conductors could be allowed to choose what they feel safest wearing and what suits their needs best. Southeastern



**Bifocal lenses can cause a blind spot**

have changed and a new Code of Practice (GO/RC3651) now covers these matters. This does not prohibit varifocal lenses but draws attention to specific risks associated with their use, particularly by drivers. These risks are around possible colour aberrations resulting in red signals appearing to be yellow under certain conditions. In reviewing this Code of Practice, Southeastern took the decision that

neither drivers nor who might be required to travel with them as a "competent person" would be permitted to wear varifocal lenses because in view of the potential to mistakenly see red signals as being yellow. Southeastern conductors may be required to travel with the driver as a "competent person" and so were not permitted to wear varifocal lenses. Following receipt of this report, we reviewed our risk assessment and the research work that underpins the Railway Group Code of Practice and concluded that the risks of mistaking signal aspects in both train dispatch and travelling as a competent person were relatively low. By comparison it could be argued that the risks highlighted by the reporter were probably more significant in that the frequency of stepping on and off trains was high and the consequence of making an error could be a serious injury. In light of this we decided that, on balance, there was a legitimate risk-based case to permit conductors and guards to wear varifocal lenses on Southeastern.

We have therefore changed our policy on this matter and revised our medical standards matrix accordingly.

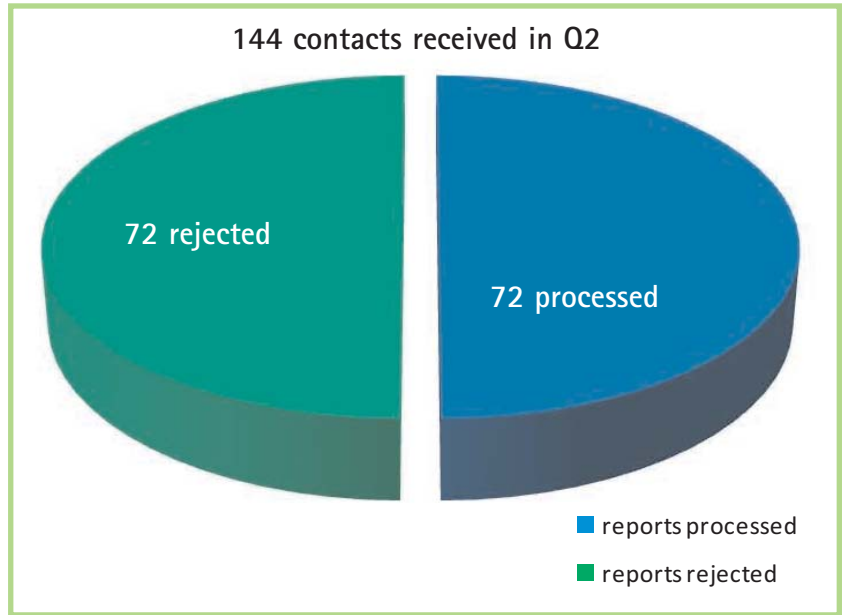
**“ could conductors be allowed to choose what they feel safest wearing ”**

clarified the policy in place explaining the rationale. Southeastern's policy on varifocal lenses has historically been based on Railway Group Standards. Recently these Standards

## STATISTICS: Breaking it down!

Every issue *The Update* brings you the latest statistics outlining the reports that have been received, processed and rejected. This issue, which presents you with statistics from the second quarter of 2009, also includes a breakdown by job category.

Don't forget – you can look for updated statistics appear on the CIRAS website [www.ciras.org.uk](http://www.ciras.org.uk). *The Reporter* also now features a Fact vs Fiction section and the latest issue focussed on the myth that CIRAS can only accept confidential reports and not anonymous reports. It will be interesting to see if this has an effect on the same statistics in Q3.

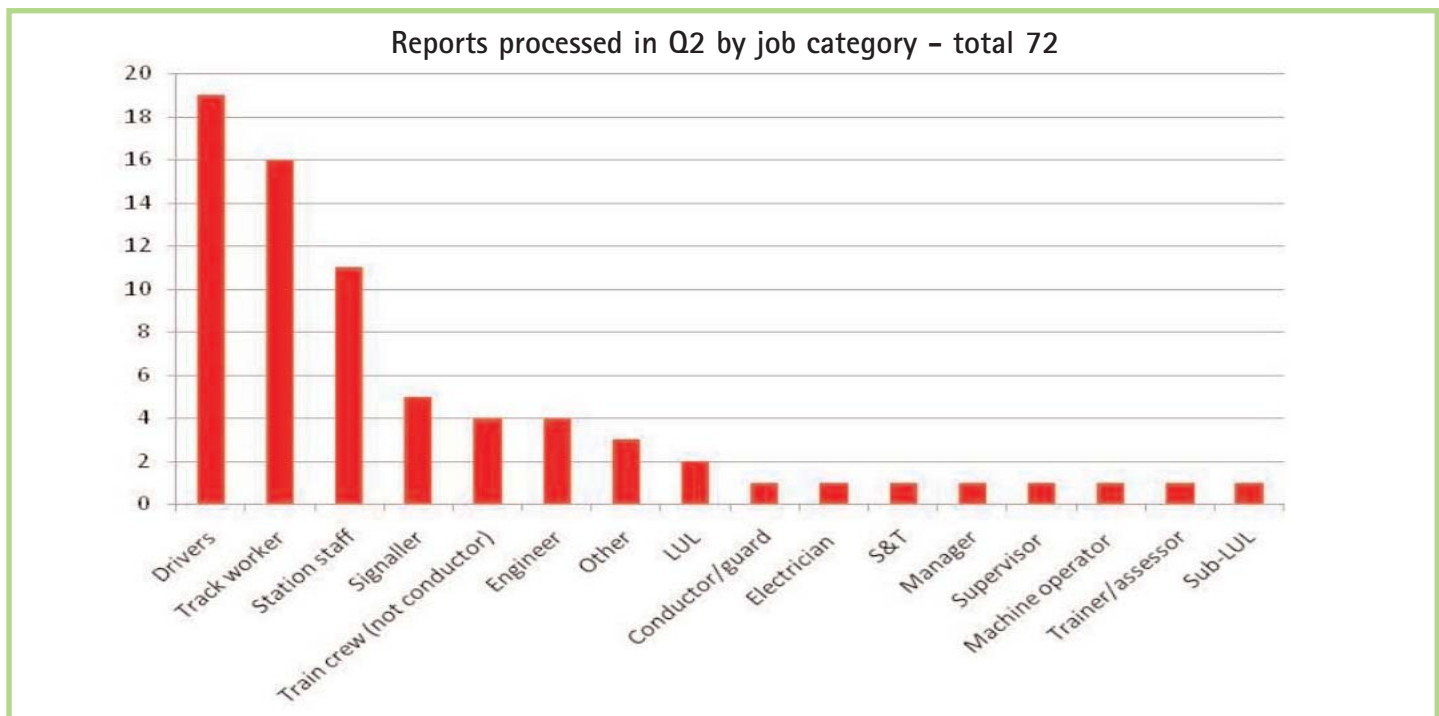


Reasons for not processing:	Number
Identifies individual	17
Not a safety concern	14
Wants to remain anonymous	13
Own channels must be used first	10
Drugs and alcohol issue	8
Real-time issue	4
Other	3
Member of the public	2
Personal grievance	1

CIRAS received a total of 144 reports in Q2. Out of the 72 reports that CIRAS processed, most were made by drivers (19), with the second and third most reports being made by track workers (16) and station staff (11). Looking at the reasons for CIRAS not processing reports, the top three reasons were:

- 1) the report details identifies the individual reporting;
- 2) the report was not about a safety concern; and
- 3) company channels hadn't been used first.

It should also be noted that CIRAS rejected 13 reports based on anonymity – eight reports received were sent anonymously and five reporters wanted to remain anonymous.



For monthly updates on CIRAS statistics please visit [www.ciras.org.uk](http://www.ciras.org.uk).