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CONCERNS ABOUT SAFETY SHOULD BE RAISED WITH YOUR LINE MANAGER OR EMPLOYER COMPANY. IF HOWEVER, YOU FEEL THAT THESE CHANNELS ARE NOT APPROPRIATE OR ADEQUATE, THEN CONTACT CIRAS.



## The other side of the phone

The research team is the heart of CIRAS. They are the people you will speak to if you call CIRAS with a concern, and they are also responsible for progressing each CIRAS report to its completion. As the team have recently welcomed two new members to the fold, we thought this was the perfect opportunity to (re)-introduce you to the team.



From left-right: Susie Beevor, Danielle Still, Chris Langer, Helle Larsen and Priya Shah

"People are often surprised that there are just five people in the research team," says Chris Langer, Senior Researcher at CIRAS. "Of course there are times when we wish there were more of us to share the workload. However, it does make it easier to keep informed of all the reports we receive and share our expertise. It also makes it easier to maintain confidentiality." Before joining CIRAS three years ago, Chris worked as a researcher at Anglia Ruskin University and he holds a MSc in Occupational Psychology. As well as leading the team, he specialises in data requests and he has just returned from the RSSB Risk Management Forum where he presented a joint paper with Barry Osgood from ISLG on "Learning from non-accidents".

Danielle Still joined the organisation at the same time as Chris. In addition to a MSc in Applied Psychology, Danielle has completed the Accident and Incident Investigation Learning Core Programme and has added to her knowledge of the railway industry through site visits, including renewal works on the Underground, signal box tours, cab rides on both NRCI and LUL and visits to maintenance depots. Danielle has an encyclopedic knowledge of all things CIRAS, but her particular focus is working with LUL and a number of the TOCs.

Helle Larsen and Priya Shah are experiencing their second month at CIRAS. Helle explains her reasons for joining, "For me, it was the opportunity to speak with frontline staff, and help improve safety standards in the rail industry." Priya, who previously lectured in Psychology at London Metropolitan University, says the first month has been about learning the basics of what makes a good CIRAS researcher: "It's about being able to listen and understand the complex issues raised by reporters in order to communicate them to other members of the rail industry in order to achieve a resolution. Accuracy, impartiality and confidentiality are fundamental to our work. In over 12 years of operation, CIRAS has never had a breach of confidentiality. That's a record I'm determined to help maintain."

Susie Beevor, a temporary Research Assistant and Psychology student has spent her summers at CIRAS, since 2006. As is usually the case in the office, the last words go to her, "Like every organisation, CIRAS has its challenges, but I keep coming back so it can't be all that bad!"

Anyone who works on the rail network is able to use CIRAS. If you would like to receive the newsletter directly via email or post, learn more about the organisation or have any suggestions to improve our services, please contact us by phone, post or text as detailed below.



## REPORT

## SPAD risk due to bright light

A reporter has expressed concern that at night on the approach to signal TT366, on the Up line at Sheet Stores Junction at Long Eaton, drivers are distracted by a bright white security light erected on the side of the building next to the infrastructure.

According to the reporter, the security light has been positioned so that it shines across the track and this distracts the drivers when approaching signal TT366. Signal TT366 always shows a red aspect until a train reaches the track circuit before the signal, where providing there is no other train in the section ahead, the signal will change to a proceed aspect. However, the reporter states that on occasions trains do have to come to a stop at signal TT366. The reporter is concerned that drivers could have a SPAD as a result of being distracted by the light.

The security light is attached to the side of a building owned by High Style Upholstery Company.

The reporter would like Network Rail to approach the company and ask them to either reposition the light or put a guard/plate on the side of the light to stop it from shining onto the tracks and distracting drivers on the approach to signal TT366.



## REPORT

## Salting of level crossings

A reporter is seeking clarification as to who is responsible for the salting of level crossings near stations, when the crossing is not used to gain entry or exit to a station platform.

The reporter believes the salting of such crossings is the responsibility of Network Rail and not the Train Operating Company (TOC) who manages the station. The reporter states that when there is frost or ice on crossings and there is a risk a pedestrian could slip, a member of staff at the station would salt the crossing to prevent an incident, but s/he doesn't believe it should be the responsibility of the TOC to do this.

Could Network Rail clarify if the responsibility of salting such level crossings is theirs, and whether there are any measures in place that ensure that this is done?



## RESPONSE FROM NETWORK RAIL

We thank the reporter for bringing this issue to our attention.

The Mobile Operations Manager undertook an initial inspection of the signal at night to photograph the signal. This inspection revealed that the floodlight was indeed blinding the visibility of the signal. Network Rail approached the private company and requested that their spotlight be addressed so that it would not interfere with the sighting of the signal at night as it was causing a safety hazard. The company have agreed to switch the light off during the hours of darkness, until a lighting contractor can be sought to fit a hood to prevent the light pollution onto the railway.

Network Rail Operations would like to take this opportunity to remind all railway staff of the importance of reporting to the Signaller or Operations Control, issues that affect the operations of the railway in "real time" in order for immediate action to be taken.



## RESPONSE FROM NETWORK RAIL

The reporter is indeed correct in their belief that it is primarily Network Rail's responsibility to grit level crossings; but, with over 5,500 passive (footpath and user worked) crossings across the network, the gritting of each one of them during frosty or snowy weather is carried out using a risk based criterion. In some cases, Network Rail has a local arrangement with the train operating company to grit the crossing on our behalf.

The introduction of anti-slip surfaces is being provided to new or renewed crossings to mitigate slipping hazards on the crossing deck.

Network Rail has many staff that are responsible for the patrolling and monitoring of level crossing conditions. Any issues are raised with the Level Crossing Risk Control Co-ordinator. However, should a member of train operator staff see any signs of level crossing misuse or safety risk we encourage that this be reported to their local manager who can then advise Network Rail Control.

## REPORT

### Loud noise when drivers release air brake on Class 66 Locos

A reporter has contacted CIRAS concerned that a high decibel sound is emitted from Class 66 Locomotives when the air brake is released by drivers. The problem is affecting shunters and ground staff as they are often in close proximity when this practice occurs.

The reporter states that the valve where they let the air brake off is at ear height for anyone outside the cab and the sharp piercing noise it expels has been measured to be approximately 85 decibels. The problem according to the reporter occurs because the air brake is released too quickly by drivers. If it was done slowly then this problem would be alleviated. The reporter perceives if exposure to this noise continues for staff it could result in permanent loss of hearing. Also, because the noise is at such a high pitch, the reporter believes a one off exposure could result in a burst eardrum.

The reporter believes drivers have been instructed to release the brake more slowly through the local working instruction, but the problem is still occurring. He/she would like to see enforcement of this instruction along with drivers being briefed and made aware of the potential consequences of their actions. He/she would also like the computers onboard the Class 66 Locos to be monitored more closely so any drivers letting off the brake too quickly can be reprimanded.

## RESPONSE FROM GB RAILFREIGHT

First GB Railfreight welcomes this report. We are aware that when air is exhausted via the emergency brake plunger when the brake pipe is being destroyed, the sound may exceed long term exposure levels and when exposure to this level of noise is undertaken on a regular basis, permanent hearing threshold shift may result. Whilst this exposure remains rare, First GB Railfreight has issued an operational instruction to their drivers which changes the process by which air is exhausted from the train pipe. The revised process does not generate the noise to which we believe the reporter refers.

Air is also exhausted to atmosphere when the direct air brake is released. As the reporter states, this action causes a short sharp noise. First GB Railfreight has issued an Operating Instruction to its drivers to make a physical check for personnel alongside the locomotive cab, prior to releasing the direct air brake and then to release the brake slowly, in order to avoid the sharp report as the air is exhausted from the brake system.

Implementation of these revised processes will be monitored by our Operational Managers.

## REPORT

### Clarification on propelling locomotives with barrier/power cars without a shunter

CIRAS has received a report seeking clarification on the rule for propelling locomotives with barrier coaches and power cars attached without the assistance of a shunter or trainman.

The reporter is aware that staff are frequently having to propel locomotives with power cars and barrier coaches at night in to sidings without the assistance of a shunter. According to the reporter, there is no one available at night to perform this role and s/he is concerned someone could get struck by the locomotive.

Can RSSB please clarify whether it is acceptable to propel locomotives with barrier coaches and power cars at night without the assistance of a shunter, as the reporter believes this is contrary to the Rule Book?

## RESPONSE FROM RSSB

The question of controlling propelling movements and other movements not driven from the leading cab has recently been the subject of a review with both Network Rail and Train Operating Company representatives. One of the points at issue was whether there are circumstances in which it is not necessary for a shunter to control such a movement, whether from the train or the ground.

The conclusion reached, after very carefully considering the risks and hazards associated with a number of different scenarios, was that a shunter is always necessary for any such movement, the only variables being where he is situated, and how he communicates with the driver. This is the only effective safeguard against a number of hazards, including the possibility of staff being struck by an unexpected movement approaching without warning.

To undertake a propelling movement unaccompanied in the way suggested by the reporter would therefore be incorrect and potentially unsafe.

Following on from the review mentioned above, the rules regarding propelling and driving from other than the leading cab, have been rewritten. The new rules make it clear how each movement must be controlled. These amended rules are available now from Willsons printers and will come into force on 7 June 2008. The changes affect Rule Book modules TW1, TW7 and SS2.



## REPORT

## Staff at risk whilst working alone

CIRAS have received a report from staff working at St Mary Cray Station regarding staff feeling vulnerable and at risk of assault as a result of working alone. According to the reporters, staff work alone for several hours each day and all night during the week and all day and night at the weekends. The reporters state that St Mary Cray Station has a particular problem with youths and fare dodgers who cause trouble at the station, often vandalising the station and causing damage.

The reporters are aware that there have been several members of staff assaulted over the past few years. The reporters state that they fear for their safety when expected to enforce Southeastern's rules and procedures for dealing with difficult passengers when working alone. This fear is exacerbated by the fact that staff do not have radios to use as a means of communicating with each other in the event of an emergency.

The reporters feel more staff need to be employed to allow two members of staff to be rostered on to each shift. The reporters are aware that Southeastern are in the process of trying to remedy the problem but seek assurance that this will include two members of staff rostered on each shift, especially the night and weekend shifts.



## RESPONSE FROM SOUTHEASTERN

Since receiving this report, we have worked closely with our staff and our Safety and Environment Department. A risk assessment has been carried out to establish the best practical solutions to this issue.

The manning arrangements are that the booking office at St. Mary Cray is manned from 0615 to 1930 (Mondays to Saturdays) and 0800 to 1630 (Sundays). Staff are also employed on the platforms 24 hours a day 7 days a week. Changes have recently been made to the roster for the platform staff.

Under the original roster, there was a mixture of lone and double working. However, a new temporary roster has been introduced to take account of the December 2007 train service alterations. Two staff are now on duty on the platforms at all times between 0600 and 2300 on a daily basis. Further modifications to the roster are currently the subject of consultation; these proposals do not, however, affect the times of lone working. From the above, it will be seen that the amount of lone working at St. Mary Cray has, therefore, recently been reduced.

Between 0105 (daily) and approximately 0415 (Mondays to Saturdays) and 0715 (Sunday) the station is locked up. The station is secure, and the layout of the station is such that there are no security problems. During this time, the member of staff can walk about the station undertaking cleaning duties.

There has been concern, however, over the safety of the lone member of staff on duty daily between 2300 and 0105, and 0415 and 0600 (Mondays to Saturdays), when the station is open. The member of staff on duty is based in an office on platforms 1 and 2, and is required to leave this office to carry out train despatch; the distance this person has to walk away from the safety of the office depends upon the length of the train being despatched. If engineering work leads to platform alterations, the member of staff is based in alternative similar facilities on platforms 3 and 4, where indeed enhanced facilities are currently being provided.

The actions which a member of staff can take in the event of a problem have been assessed. When more than one member of platform staff is rostered, they can communicate with each other by local hand held radios. When working alone, the member of staff can return to the office, and shut himself/herself in there. That person could then phone for help, e.g. from the British Transport Police or the local Supervisor at Bromley South. All staff working at St. Mary Cray are aware of the facilities provided locally for their safety. Contact details are shown on the Local Emergency Plan. Staff are made aware of its contents as part of the local Job Induction process and ongoing re-briefings. Regular checks are made that facilities provided are operational, as this is covered on our Planned General Instructions procedure. Moreover, the local Fire Precautions Manager undertakes regular checks.

CCTV is provided at the station, and monitored from Friars Bridge Court. Pictures can be seen by staff at St. Mary Cray; in the event of a problem with picture quality, staff in the CCTV suite can be asked to keep an eye on a particular part of that location. It is agreed that there is a problem with vandalism; however recently there is no evidence that this is a greater issue during times of lone working than at other times. Similarly, there is a problem with fares evasion. However, this was not seen as having any bearing on the lone working.

Crime related incidents at St. Mary Cray have been reviewed. There has, indeed, been a slight increase overall from 2005/06 to 2006/07. However, the level of crime is still less than one incident per week. There were nine incidents of violence in 2006/7; although low, this did put St. Mary Cray into the top 20 locations on Southeastern. However, of these nine, only two were against staff, and one of these involved a Rail Enforcement Officer, who, unlike other members of staff, are required to adopt more of a "hands on" approach. The other did not involve a member of St. Mary Cray platform staff. All other incidents involved members of the public, and had again had little bearing on lone working.

During recent discussions with staff, a number of further measures to protect lone working staff have been agreed, and are being progressed, such as:

- the provision of a mobile phone to enable staff to call for help, should the need arise
- checks, no more than 60 minutes apart, from the Bromley South Supervisor after 2300 and through the night till 0600, to be made particularly 5 minutes after a train has left St. Mary Cray, these calls being logged.
- special measures which will apply if the call from the Bromley South Supervisor is not answered, e.g. a request to the CCTV suite at Friars Bridge Court for the station area to be viewed, allowing also, in the event of a problem being suspected, a member of staff from elsewhere to attend at St. Mary Cray.
- a document to be written, displayed at, and made accessible to staff at both St. Mary Cray and Bromley South, setting out both the normal and emergency arrangements described above.

The findings of the risk assessment, and the new arrangements themselves will be shared and briefed to all staff who work at St Mary Cray.

## CIRAS COMMENT

The following report highlights the issue of rail-road operators working double and treble shifts at Hydrex. The reporter makes it clear however, that s/he feels this is an industry wide issue, which goes beyond just one company. CIRAS would like to hear from anyone with similar concerns to assess the scope of this issue.

CIRAS would like to thank Hydrex and Network Rail for agreeing to provide an update on this report in a future edition of the Reporter.

## REPORT

**Staff working double/treble shifts**

A reporter is concerned about the potential for serious injury as a result of double and treble shifting amongst road-rail operators at Hydrex. A very similar report also about back-to-back shifts at Hydrex was received in June. In that report, a request for an audit of the relevant timesheets and paperwork was made. The same request is also being made by the reporter in this case. The reporter would like to see all timesheets for Warrington and Durham rail-road operators scrutinized for the last six months.

When an operator has finished a 12-hour shift, s/he may travel several hours to a new site to do another 12-hour shift – this second shift is not recorded at the first site. Some operators (known as 'weekend warriors') are frequently working 36 hours at the weekend alone, and will work nearly 80 hours over a week.

The situation is complicated by the fact that they may also have jobs for other companies in the rail industry in the week, or even work outside the rail industry altogether. There is a large financial incentive to work extremely long hours at the weekend, despite the fact many will be aware of the safety risks.

The reporter makes it clear that the timesheet evidence that would reveal this problem is difficult to obtain because steps are taken to disguise what is actually going on. Rosters are drawn up for particular sites and a double or treble shift will typically not appear on the same paperwork at any one site. It is alleged some falsification of documentation also takes place.

There are specific instructions by management not to put operators on two consecutive shifts on the same site. Hence, to be effective, any audit must review concurrent timesheets at several different locations. The reporter acknowledges that staff shortages and commercial pressure drive this practice, but states that it can only happen with explicit approval at senior management level.

Though this report is being made specifically about Hydrex, the reporter makes it clear that this is a question for the industry as a whole. There is no overarching body to check the hours worked by staff who may work for several different subcontractors concurrently. Though it is undoubtedly difficult to monitor and enforce more reasonable working hours, the reporter says the current system is deeply flawed and not subject to the appropriate checks and balances.

The reporter would like to ask Network Rail a direct question: As Infrastructure Controller, are they comfortable with this level of risk being imported by subcontractor practices that do not conform to Hidden in any recognised form?

Network Rail could exert a very positive influence on the monitoring of systems designed to ensure everyone's safety. Rather than ignore this subcontractor 'loophole', could this issue be approached robustly with some senior level intervention? The practices at Hydrex are by no means an isolated case. If Network Rail won't look at this issue, who will?



## RESPONSE FROM HYDREX

Hydrex senior management have invested heavily in a separate Compliance Department which functions alongside the operation role to the business. The Compliance Department covers areas such as Health and Safety, Quality, Competence Management, Engineering Standards, and Training. Our monitoring systems are, we believe, extremely robust in that on a weekly basis we monitor forecast hours to be worked by each employee at the planning stage, and then review actual hours following completion of each week's work bank. Hydrex senior management categorically do not condone double shifting by any operators, and certainly not changing paperwork to show otherwise.

Following this report we investigated the 6 months timesheets between March and September 2007 (the period to which this report relates) for Warrington and Durham roadrail operators in great detail. We have highlighted a problem which existed, albeit confined to one area of our business, and taken very firm steps to address it, including personnel changes. We are very proud of our safety record having completed over 29,000 shifts (twenty-nine thousand) on the rail network in 2007, and completed the year with an AFR of 0.14. Hydrex senior management have no intention of jeopardising that record.

On a wider basis the subject of operator hours has long been an issue within the industry as a whole. The variable work patterns and often short lead times given to Roadrail Vehicle Suppliers when orders are placed make planning difficult. Accordingly many operators register themselves with a handful of RRV supply companies ensuring that they will always have a shift to go to when they want to work. The difficulties can increase when an operator at very short notice declines a previously accepted shift with one supplier in favour of a shift with another supplier who may be offering marginally better wage rates – or even a shift nearer to home. Because of these difficulties we have employed more operators on full time contracts to ensure continuity of supply.

Some years ago there was a proposal to introduce a "swipe card" system for operators whereby they would "swipe in" at the start of a shift and "swipe out" at the end of a shift. The details on the card would be electronically recorded in a central location on a "real time" basis, and if a "swipe in" was attempted too soon after the previous "swipe out" then a red light on the machine would alert the site to the fact that the operator had not had his required break. At the time the idea was dropped on cost grounds – today, however, when every small restaurant or garage seems to be able to operate a hands free swipe card system for credit card payments, surely the technology must now be available at the right price.



## RESPONSE FROM NETWORK RAIL

As a result of this report, Network Rail will investigate the named supplier's arrangements for the management of fatigue and working hours. Action will be taken against any individual or organisation that is found to be in breach of legislative or contractual requirements.

In general, all suppliers that employ people that work 'on or near the line' are audited on an annual basis. The organisation and arrangements for the management of fatigue and control of working hours form part of the annual audit assessment.

Furthermore, Network Rail has a programme of project and site inspections/safety tours that include the 'spot checking' of arrangements to control risk arising from fatigue and long working hours.

Network Rail acknowledges its role in providing leadership in this area and will continue to work with our supply chain to reduce the risk associated with excessive working hours and travelling time. The Project Safety Leadership Group's Safety Improvement Team (SIT) are engaged in the ongoing development of initiatives to further reduce the risk in this area.

Everyone should note that if they have any concerns regarding other personnel acting in an unsafe manner or unfit condition, then they should in the first instance inform their supervisor, line manager or a representative of the main contractor. It is important that Network Rail have as much detail as possible of alleged incidents for us to undertake thorough investigations.



## REPORT

## South Harrow station open during power failure

A reporter has contacted CIRAS concerned about what s/he believes was a lack of a safe system of work in operation at South Harrow station during a recent power failure.

The reporter believes that during the power failure the contingency plan was not followed as per LUL rules. The reporter is concerned that in such an event there are a number of safety consequences which should have been considered before it was decided to keep the station open.

In the case of an emergency, a PA announcement would not have been possible to make during the failure. Also there are no OPO (One Person Operation) monitors working for a driver to see the platform. The station environment is also affected as there is no lighting or heating and basic facilities cannot be used.

The reporter believes if a similar situation occurred again, either the station should be closed or if it is to remain open that additional manpower is provided in order to alleviate some of the potential safety risks.



## REPORT

## Ticket counter too low at Elephant & Castle

During the refurbishment of Elephant and Castle station nearly five years ago, the ticket office was rebuilt with a steel counter running its entire length of approximately 3 metres long. A reporter is concerned the counter is too low for the clerks to sit at with their knees under it. This is a frequent source of complaint amongst staff and has led to some staff sustaining injuries.

The reporter would like this longstanding problem to finally be addressed with some sort of remedial action. It is suggested that if it prevents staff from sustaining injuries it is likely to save money if a long-term fix is provided.



## RESPONSE FROM LUL

I am pleased to be able to inform you that after a considerable period of time working with unsatisfactory equipment that has caused discomfort to my staff, the issues surrounding the counter at Elephant & Castle station are being rectified as follows:-

- 1) Removal of the ticketing equipment will begin on the night of 10th August 2008 (Sunday).
- 2) Works to remove the existing counter and fit the new one begin on 11th August 2008 with a proposed finish date of Sunday 17th August 2008.
- 3) On the night of 17th August, the ticketing equipment will be re-connected and tested.
- 4) It is aimed that the ticket office will be brought back into use on the morning of the 18th August 2008. There will be a "floorwalker/trouble-shooter" present to address any training issues or problems my staff may have directly as they arise.

I hope this addresses your concerns surrounding the situation at Elephant & Castle – I can only apologise for the delay in actioning these improvement works.



## RESPONSE FROM LUL

On Sunday 3rd February 2008 the area surrounding South Harrow Station suffered from a local power failure. The Station which is an open section Station remained closed from start of traffic until 09:00 hours when the ambient light became sufficient for the Station to open safely.

The night turn Supervisor was asked to stay on for a couple of hours to assist the early turn in getting the Station ready to open.

The Supervisor on duty on the day was visited by the Duty Station Manager and was asked to monitor the situation and keep the Duty Manager informed of any changes.

Extra staff was sent to South Harrow during the day to assist with the dispatching of the trains due to the failure of the OPO equipment and to assist on various parts of the Station.

All Stations have loud hailer available to make public announcements in case the public address system fails.

These could be used by the members of staff on duty to evacuate the station in an emergency or to give out service information when required and to give customer information when dispatching trains.

Two emergency generators were supplied to the Station to give basic Station facilities i.e. Lighting and electrics

The Station fully reopened at 17:00 when full power was restored to the area.

The actions taken throughout the incident were consistent with both the stations Congestion Control and Emergency Plan and the Rule book.





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