
Safety report Quarter 3 (October - December) 2018

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Agenda item 7d

Date : 12th February 2019

Background

Thankfully, this quarter has been a relatively quiet one for incidents on the rail and tram networks, although we are expecting to receive in the next quarter the Rail Accident Investigation Branch annual report and also their report on the management of stranded trains and the effect on passengers.

Activity

As agreed earlier in 2018 I act on behalf of both London TravelWatch and Transport Focus, but in order to ensure that both organisations are well represented at meetings and resilience in knowledge, other London TravelWatch policy team members have also attended meetings of various industry bodies on my behalf. These have included the 'People on Trains and Stations Risk Group', (convened and hosted by Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB)): the Office of Rail and Road's (ORR's) Rail industry Health and Safety Advisory Committee; and Parliamentary Advisory Committee for Transport Safety (PACTS) Rail Working Group.

I have formal meetings quarterly with Jill Collis, Director of Safety at Transport for London (TfL), and annually with Simon French, Chief Inspector of the Rail Accident Investigation Branch (RAIB) of the Department for Transport (DfT). However, I meet both of these regularly at other industry meetings. I have also newly established links with Mark Norton, Head of Railway Safety at the DfT, initially discussing issues related to slips, trips and falls on trains and at stations.

I continue to respond on behalf of both organisations to safety consultations such as operator safety certification and to requests from the RAIB and RSSB for commentary on their reports prior to publication. I have also begun participation in a number of research projects associated with safety of passengers notably on air quality within confined spaces such as stations and also the health, safety and wellbeing effects of crowding on passengers.

As a result of our concerns about poor communications between train drivers, Network Rail signallers and train operator train running controllers I visited the York Railway Operating Centre with Jordan Sergeant from Transport Focus, hosted by GTR on the 9th November 2018.. This was very useful in gaining understanding of the operating environment of railway signallers and train service controllers and how their work and decision making affects passengers e.g. how delays in Northumbria can have knock on effects on services in Surrey and West Sussex.

Themes

During this period, a number of common themes have continued to feature. These include:

- **'Trap and Drag'** incidents involving trams and trains, whereby people or objects have been trapped by closing doors followed by the train or tram moving off causing damage and injury.
- **Poor communications** between train drivers, Network Rail signallers and train operator train running controllers. Several serious instances have occurred where a lack of understanding of where safety authority lies, that could have resulted in deaths or serious injuries. The RAIB is continuing its' investigations into these instances.
- **Stranded trains.** The procedures for how and when passengers should or could be evacuated from stranded trains, and also the dangers inherent from passengers leaving trains between stations without authority from staff.
- **User worked crossings** on Network Rail infrastructure. These are crossings where the route is normally closed to road vehicles or pedestrians, but have the facility to cross the railway after authorisation by a signaller. Often these are in remote locations and are used to access farm buildings and associated dwellings.

A new area of concern this quarter has been a number of train derailments of freight, light or empty coaching stock trains. These have not resulted in passenger injuries but have caused extensive disruption to passenger train services thereafter. The causes of these derailments are varied, but I will keep this concern under review.

After a long period of no fatalities on the railway network amongst workers and passengers, the period was marred by two incidents. One resulted in the death of a track worker whilst setting up an engineering possession for work on the line south of Purley: and the other the death of a passenger leaning out of the window of a Great Western High Speed Train between Bath and Bristol. In the latter case, the person struck a tree branch that encroached on the railway line. The train concerned was formed of carriages built in the mid 1970's that require an opening window in the door, in order to allow passengers to open the door at stations. These trains are in the process of being withdrawn from service or refurbished with new doors that do not require this method of operation. The incident also highlights the need for effective vegetation management by Network Rail.

Recommendations

Members are recommended to note this report.

Tim Bellenger

February 2019