

[Press release: Report 03/2017: Trains passed over washed out track at Baildon](#)

Summary

Between 16:29 and 17:58 hrs on 7 June 2016, three passenger trains passed over a section of the single line at Baildon, where part of the supporting embankment had been washed away by flood water. This left one of the rails unsupported over a length of between 3 and 4 metres. None of the trains derailed and no one was injured.

The washout occurred following a period of intense rainfall between around 15:30 and 16:00 hrs that afternoon. A member of the public had noticed the washed out track and had reported it to the local Fire and Rescue Service who had then informed Network Rail shortly before 16:30 hrs. Around the same time, the driver of a train on that line reported there was flooding in the area, with the water being above the level of the rails. Network Rail stopped train movements and sent staff to inspect the track at the location reported by the train driver. The inspection found that the flood water had receded significantly, but did not identify the washout because it was at a different location. At 17:30 hrs, the line was reopened for use at its normal maximum speed of 50 mph (80 km/h).

At 17:45 hrs, a second train passed over the damaged section of track. The driver did not report any fault, but a call from a member of the public was received by the local police stating they had witnessed this train passing over the unsupported section. The message was passed to Network Rail, but before the line was again blocked to traffic, a third train passed over it. This train also had not been stopped from running over the washout. The driver of this train saw the washout, but was unable to stop his train, passing over it at a speed of 38 mph (62 km/h). He subsequently stopped the train and made an emergency call to the signaller.

These near miss incidents occurred because the reports of the damaged track from members of the public, via the emergency services, were not dealt with appropriately by railway controllers. The track damage was similar to a previous washout at the same location that occurred in August 2012. Since that incident, no action had been taken on the recommendations considered by Network Rail to prevent a recurrence.

Recommendations

As a result of its investigation, the RAIB has made three recommendations to Network Rail, relating to:

- measures to minimise the risk of further washouts at Baildon
- improving the emergency response to incidents on the track by providing

Network Rail responders with accurate location information

- improving the effectiveness of communicating safety critical information between incident controllers, signallers and drivers.

The RAIB has also identified three learning points. Two are for control office staff about the importance of listening carefully to safety critical messages, and the need to continuously monitor and maintain standards in safety critical communication. The third is for duty holders, regarding the requirement to inform the RAIB of incidents which, in slightly different circumstances, could have resulted in a more serious outcome.

Notes to editors

1. The sole purpose of RAIB investigations is to prevent future accidents and incidents and improve railway safety. RAIB does not establish blame, liability or carry out prosecutions.
2. RAIB operates, as far as possible, in an open and transparent manner. While our investigations are completely independent of the railway industry, we do maintain close liaison with railway companies and if we discover matters that may affect the safety of the railway, we make sure that information about them is circulated to the right people as soon as possible, and certainly long before publication of our final report.
3. For media enquiries, please call 01932 440015.

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