

Press release: Report 16/2017: Track worker near miss incidents at Camden Junction South

Summary

At around 01:03 hrs on the morning of Tuesday 28 February 2017, a passenger train travelling towards London Euston station nearly struck a track worker in the vicinity of Camden Junction South. The train was travelling at about 47 mph (76 km/h) at the time and the track worker managed to get clear of the line before the train passed him. About four minutes later, the same train was involved in another near miss with a second track worker some 510 metres further up the line towards London. In this case, the track worker was unable to get clear of the line, but the train stopped just before reaching him. There was no injury or significant delay as a consequence of the incidents.

The incidents occurred because the signaller authorised track workers to go onto a line over which he had just routed a train, having overlooked the fact that engineering work was taking place on that line. This was caused by a loss of information during the processes for implementing the engineering work. In turn, this was due to the layout and formatting of documentation associated with the work, as well as the nature and implementation of local processes at the signalling centre. The signaller was also possibly affected by fatigue, and the RAIB observed that, although not causal to the incidents, Network Rail's management of fatigue risk for signallers is not in accordance with current good practice.

One underlying factor was associated with processes and methods for managing and communicating information regarding engineering work in modern, multi-panel signalling centres. A second was that the processes for setting up such work still require people to be present on track, exposing them to risk in the transition period before protection is fully implemented.

Recommendations

The RAIB has made three recommendations and identified two learning points. The recommendations are all addressed to Network Rail and concern improved processes and documentation for supporting the implementation of engineering work, and reducing the exposure of track workers to risk arising from the need to be on the track. The learning points highlight the need for safety-critical staff to be appropriately prepared and fit for duty, and for track workers to be alert to the risks on the railway, even when they believe that they are working under protection.

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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