

Report 16/2019: Near miss between a passenger train and lorry at Mucking AHB level crossing

Summary

Shortly before noon on Wednesday 13 March 2019, a passenger train passed over Mucking automatic half barrier level crossing a few seconds after a partially loaded concrete delivery lorry had reversed clear as part of a manoeuvre to enter an adjacent Network Rail construction site. The lorry driver was following hand signals from a railway worker and drove onto the crossing after it had been automatically activated by the approaching train and red stop lights had begun flashing. A lowering crossing barrier came down on the lorry and was manually lifted by site staff, before the lorry reversed off the crossing.

Near miss at Mucking Level Crossing

The incident happened because staff involved in the work planning, and staff on site, did not recognise and manage risk associated with working near level crossings. Following the incident, Network Rail highlighted this risk in a briefing note issued to organisations and staff working on its infrastructure. The Amey Inabensa joint venture working at the construction site modified procedures and briefed staff on the risk.

Recommendations

The RAIB did not make any recommendations because Network Rail and the Amey Inabensa joint venture had already addressed the factors that would have resulted in recommendations. The RAIB has identified four learning points covering compliance with the Highway Code, the control of construction vehicles near level crossings, taking account of nearby level crossings when planning construction work and effective management of small construction sites.

Simon French, Chief Inspector of Rail Accidents said:

“This report describes a near-miss that could so easily have turned into a disaster. Safety at automatic level crossings depends on users following the Highway Code, and not entering the crossing after the flashing lights and audible signals have started. In this case the driver of a lorry loaded with concrete followed hand signals from a railway worker and drove his vehicle onto the crossing as the lights began to flash. The lorry reversed clear just six seconds before a train passed.

“The interface between railway companies and contractors can create significant risks if it is not properly managed. It is important that railway staff, who should know how to do the job safely, take the lead in making

contractors aware of the hazards that go with working near the track. No matter how small the job or the site, it only takes one concrete mixer to create the conditions for a catastrophic accident. Although the road vehicle driver had a legal duty to stop at the red flashing lights, in this case he should not have been put in such a position by taking his lead from a railway worker waving him on. Proper planning prevents poor performance.”

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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