SCC Training
Briefing Notes
Module 5: Confirming Understanding

Introduction

The Safety Critical Communications training programme is modular. The full programme consists of **six** modules:

- Foundation
- Protocols 1 (ABC-P, Phonetic Alphabet, Numbers, Time)
- Structure and Lead Responsibility
- Protocols 2 (Standard Words and Phrases, Emergency Call, Equipment)
- Confirming Understanding (Repeat Back, Questioning)
- Communication Skills (Assertiveness, Challenging, Understanding Other's Needs)

For best results, please deliver the modules in order. It is especially important to deliver the **Foundation Module** first. However, you may want to prioritise one of the other modules if you are faced with a particular communication issue.

Timing

The module will take at least 45 minutes to deliver. The timings are as follows:

- Presented Content: 18min
- Discussions and Questions (6): 25min
- Test Questions: 10min

Discussions

Do not skip the discussions. They are essential to the learning process. Without them, the content will just be a stream of meaningless words. It is important that attendees work through the issues themselves as well as listening to the briefing material.

Try and ensure that everyone participates in the discussions. You may need to balance 'loud' individuals with those more reluctant to speak. Bear in mind that the quiet, thoughtful person at the back of the room may have a valuable contribution to make.

Your input is welcome. Your specific experience and knowledge are relevant to the discussion. You may wish to guide the discussion and make it relevant to your particular area of the industry, though please don't detract from the minimum standard set by this training course.

Notes for each discussion are provided below in the Content Notes. Don't 'wade in' with your answers too early. Let the group make their own suggestions and perhaps argue with each other.

National Minimum Standard

The standard is composed of **Key Learning Points** which are highlighted throughout the module and again, in the summary at the end. There is nothing difficult or complex about the standard. It simply seeks to set a minimum level, above which we should all be operating.

The **Key Learning Points** for this module are**:**

- **Use the standard words and phrases**

- **Learn to make an Emergency Call**

- **Safety Critical Communications is a formal conversation**

The Test

The test is not designed to catch anyone out. It simply makes sure that attendees have understood the material. The questions are all based on the National Minimum Standard. As the Briefer, you will be responsible for delivering the questions, which are provided below.

The questions should be directed to **individuals** within the group, making sure that **each person answers at least one question**. If someone fails a question, allow the other group members to help them, and then ask them another.

Delivering the Presentation

The PowerPoint presentation contains voice-over and example communication recordings. You will therefore need to make sure that you can **deliver audio to the room** at a suitable volume.

Most of the content is voice-over driven and the **slides will auto-forward**. However, we have paused the auto-forwarding in certain places to allow you to facilitate a discussion, play an example, or check that attendees are happy with the content.

Slides which require you to press forward (space bar, forward arrow or left-mouse click) are marked with this icon in the bottom right-hand corner.
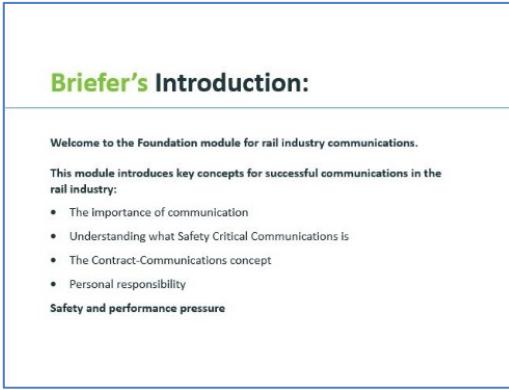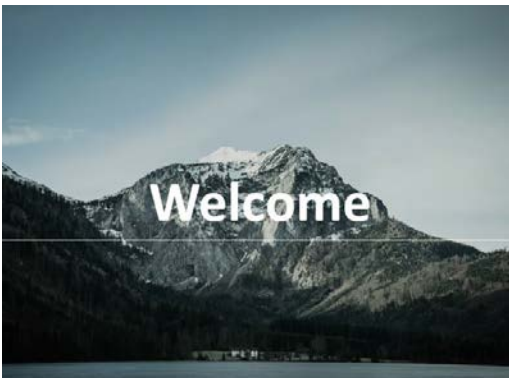
VO Slides containing voice-over. Note, the voice over is **sometimes delayed** to allow learners to digest the contents of a slide before listening to it. **Be patient!**

…VO pause before VO   VO… pause after the VO   VO…VO pause between VOs

Content Notes

The following relate to specific content in the module. You may wish to have the module open

Page Reference	Notes
Briefer's Introduction: Welcome to the Foundation module for rail industry communications. This module introduces key concepts for successful communications in the rail industry: • The importance of communication • Understanding what Safety Critical Communications is • The Contract-Communications concept • Personal responsibility **Safety and performance pressure**	The presentation has some notes at the beginning. These are for you, the Briefer, and not for attendees.
Welcome	This Welcome page is designed to sit on the screen while you take care of 'housekeeping' details such as fire exit and introductions.
Safety Critical Communications	This first section recaps some of the key points about rail industry protocols that we dealt with in previous modules.

Barriers to Communication	This section looks at barriers – things that might prevent effective communication taking place. We then move on to how to overcome them.
DISCUSSION Q. What barriers to understanding are there? – What prevents us from communicating well?	Hopefully you'll get answers along the lines of talking too fast, poor language skills, accents, poor telephone lines etc. If your attendees are all new to the industry, they may wish to consider day-to-day communication, say between friends, family or colleagues in their previous job. **No need for you to provide answers** – we'll do that in the following slides. Here's some examples of what might happen if communication fails: e.g. an action that was not meant to happen, e.g. a driver thinks they were authorised to pass a signal at danger when they were told to wait for the signal e.g. A track worker missing an audible warning to move because of a noisy environment.
Environmental Barriers	

Equipment Barriers	
Linguistic Barriers	
Spot Quiz 1 **?** **Q. What is a Twichell?** 1. An alleyway 2. A bird table 3. A small screwdriver	In the East Midlands, a Twichell is an Alleyway. The purpose of this question is to demonstrate that people won't understand a regional word unless they come from that region.
Spot Quiz 2 **?** **Q. What is a Cob?** 1. A round loaf of bread 2. A building material 3. A seagull	The purpose of this question is to demonstrate that people may **mis**understand a regional word – probably worse than not understanding it.

Dalek **Metal Mickey** **Bang Move** The Peg One on Juice rail **Slack** Rhubarb **The Full Monty** Billy Bunter Dusty Bin It's best to avoid Jargon. Be aware of possible confusion and be prepared to ask for confirmation/ clarification	Jargon is a tricky issue. In an ideal world, we'd get rid of it altogether. However, that's unrealistic. In many ways, jargon helps to create an industry culture. So, as a pragmatic approach, we should reduce its use and be aware that not everyone will be familiar with the terms we use. We should also encourage everyone, especially new recruits, to **ask** if they don't understand.
Overcoming Communication Barriers	
KEY LEARNING **Overcome communication barriers:** 1. Use the **best communication position** 2. Speak slightly **slower at a good volume** 3. Avoid **ambiguous language, regional words and jargon** 4. Use the **protocols** 5. Confirm understanding – **repeat back**	
Repeat Back	We look at 'repeat back' a lot during the course, and make no apology for doing so!

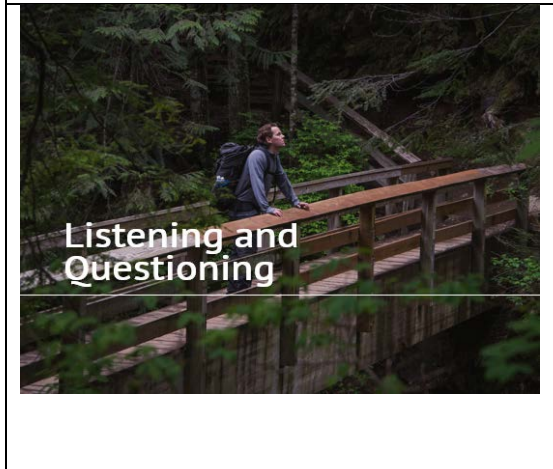|	
KEY LEARNING Avoid parrot-like repeat-back and listen out for it in others	
Q. **Who** was repeating parrot-fashion? Q. **What** should the Signaller, who has lead responsibility, have done? • Listening • Questioning	The COSS was 'parroting;' the signaller should have recognised the problem and asked the COSS to take note of what was being said. This example is based on a near-miss incident in which a train ran on the up line which the COSS believed to have been blocked. Note, you'll need to manually move forward to get the 'Listening and Questioning' bullet points and then again to move to the next section.
Listening and Questioning	
Audio snippets demonstrating good and bad questioning technique.	This slide provides two examples of questioning in action. Ask the group what is good or bad about each recording. Left-hand-side: notice how the Signaller remains calm and doesn't respond to the aggressive behaviour of the member of the public. Notice that he takes time to explain **why** he is asking questions. Right-hand-side: notice how the Control Manger starts with a blunt question and then becomes increasingly aggressive. He doesn't allow time for a full answer before asking

	another question which makes it feel like an interrogation. Also, his tone of voice is very poor. The result is a defensive response from the caller and increasing tension between the two. None of this helps the situation. In fact, it is counter productive.
KEY LEARNING Use active listening and neutral questions to confirm understanding.	
Module Review	
KEY LEARNING 1 Overcome communication barriers: 1. Use the best communicating position 2. Speak slightly slower at a good volume 3. Avoid ambiguous language and regional words; keep jargon to a minimum 4. Use the protocols 5. Confirm understanding – repeat back	This slide is designed to enable you to run this as a mini Q and A session (ask them to remember) or as a straight 'tell them' slide. You may need to provide hints if you run this as a Q and A.
KEY LEARNING 2 Avoid **parrot like repeat back** and **listen out** for it in others 3 **Use active listening** and **neutral questions** to confirm understanding.	

Module Conclusion

Every time we hold an operational conversation, we are agreeing a contract

- keep the contract tight

Your briefer will now conduct a **short test** to confirm understanding.

M5 Test Questions

This module has presented the 'Confirming Understanding' module of the course.

The National Minimum Standard requires that attendees understand the following Key Learning Points:

The **Key Learning Points** are:

1. **Overcome communication barriers:**

   - **Use the best communicating position**

   - **Speak slightly slower at a good volume**

   - **Avoid ambiguous language and regional words; keep jargon to a minimum**

   - **Use the protocols**

   - **Confirm understanding – repeat back**

2. **Avoid parrot like repeat back and listen out for it in others**

3. **Use active listening and neutral questions to confirm understanding**

Questions

Make sure that everyone in the room answers at least one question. It's best to ask them in order as some of them build on previous questions.

1. **Q. Name an environmental communication barrier – something in our working environment that makes communications more difficult.**

   A. One of noise (train cab, station platform, machinery) or weather (wind, rain)

2. **Q. Name a linguistic communication barrier – something about our use of language that makes communication more difficult (you could ask someone else to name a second one if you wish).**

   A. One of vague language (eg. "it's over there… he's on it…"); jargon (metal mickey etc); regional words ('twichell' as an access point); strong accents.

3. **Q. Name two actions that you can take to avoid communication barriers.**

   A. Two of: use the best communication position; speak slowly at a good volume; avoid ambiguous language, regional words and jargon; use the protocols (phonetic alphabet etc.); confirm understanding (repeat back).

4. **Q. Only the person with Lead Responsibility can use 'repeat back.' True or False?**

   A. False. This standard phrase may be used by anyone who needs to clarify details or check understanding.

5. **Q. Repeating information 'parrot fashion' is not a problem as long as we are also making notes or filling out a form. True or false?**

    A. False. We must all avoid 'parroting' information and listen out for others doing it. Parroting information means that we are not listening correctly – we are not understanding what is being said.

6. **Q. If we think someone might be 'parroting' information – thoughtlessly repeating what is being said – we should ask them a question to confirm their understanding. True or false?**

    A. True. Asking a question is good practice in this situation.

7. **Q. What should we avoid when asking more than one question? (give a hint if needed: we don't want to make people feel threatened or they'll become defensive)**

    A. We must avoid the communication become like an interrogation: only ask one question at a time and make sure that the person has time to answer.

8. **Q. Active listening involves three things. Name one of them.**

    A. One of hearing; understanding; responding appropriately.

9. **Q. Name another (of the three things involved in active listening).**

    A. Another one of hearing; understanding; responding appropriately.

10. **Q. A neutral or non-threatening question tends to use, a. 'we' statements or b. 'you' statements?**

    A. A neutral question will tend to use 'we' and 'I' statements rather than accusing 'you' statements. Eg. "I think we've got confused. Which signal requires protection?"