

Operational Close Calls

The definition of a close call is ***'an event that had the potential to cause injury or damage'***. In other words they incidents and situations where no-one was hurt and nothing was damaged on this occasion, but next time the outcome could be different.

Irregular working has in the past focused on unsafe incidents that take place on an operational railway (including managed stations) and have a direct potential for safety loss. If left unresolved these may directly affect the safe operation of the railway and lead to a safety incident, and therefore require immediate action. These incidents will now be referred to as ***'Operational Close Call'*** incidents.



Close calls cover unsafe acts and unsafe conditions in all work environments connected with the railway (including construction sites). 'Operational Close Call' incidents are a subset of close calls, that require an immediate operational response.

Sometimes the term 'near miss' is used to describe a close call but within the rail industry a near miss generally refers to an incident that occurs when people are nearly hit by a train. This will be captured in the scope of an 'Operational Close Call' incident.

Frequently Asked Questions



What happens to the Irregular Working Process with the Close Call system introduced?

You will continue to report an 'Operational Close Call' incident as you do now as a safety of the line incident it will be responded to in the same way. The incident should be reported to Control who will organise the appropriate level of response.

These will undergo a risk ranking assessment and there will be an investigation to identify lessons learned and actions to prevent recurrence.

Network Rail is obliged to share information on 'Operational Close Call' incidents with the wider industry to enable cross industry analysis and learning from our precursor incidents. Operational Close Call events will therefore continue to be recorded in the Safety Management Information System (SMIS) so you can continue to monitor your events here.



Will I have to report an Operational Close Call and then report it as a close call as well?

No, The main priority is to report the incident and work with Control to manage the event. The systems are able to share this data for you.



What about those events that are Operational Close Call incidents but which get reported to the close call number?

The close call number is manned by trained operators who will identify when they are receiving a report of an 'Operational Close Call' incident and if the incident requires immediate action they will pass this onto the relevant Control.

A cross check will be undertaken to ensure that relevant incidents reported to the close call team are flagged and transferred to SMIS.



What type of events should be reported as 'Operational Close Call'?

The opportunity has been taken to refine the list of 'Operational Close Call' events. These are detailed below.

A key change is the removal of events where safety loss has actually occurred (e.g. cut cables, points run through). Although these events could be caused by an irregular act, they are events where the loss or damage has been realised and so they are reported and captured separately.

Another key change is a reduction in the number of 'wrong routing' incidents that are reported as an 'Operational Close Call'. Only those wrong routing events resulting in a direct potential for safety loss are included in the scope. Specifically these are:

- Train authorised into a line blockage
- Trains signalled into a possession
- Trains signalled into an isolated section
- Trains signalled into an occupied platform
- Trains signalled into a section without line clearance (out of gauge)

However all wrong routing events should still be reported via Control and they will still be captured.



How do I risk rank an Operational Close Call Event?

The initial investigation form has been revised and will now be referred to as an ***Operational Close Call Incident form*** and has been made easier and simpler to complete.

It focuses on reporting the incident and providing a rationale behind the risk ranking.

There is a new section to record the follow up action agreed including whether an investigation will take place or whether there is sufficient evidence to suggest no further action is required. It is hoped that this change will allow more efficient reporting within the current 72 hour time requirement.

Additionally a guidance page has been provided within the form to support you to accurately complete the form.

The transition to the new name and use of the up-dated form can start from now with full implementation of the process expected by 1st April 2013.

Appendix A: 'Operational Close Call' incidents (this list is not exhaustive):

- Change of signal aspect caused by a person in error, (except where actual loss has occurred, e.g. signal passed at danger, driver shock, etc.)
- Despatch process commencing while platform starting signal at danger
- Discharge irregularity
- Earthing equipment not removed
- Failed to caution train
- Failure to collect token
- Handbrake left on
- Handsignaller failed to remain in position
- Inadequate protection/safe system of work
- Incorrect placement or type earthing equipment used
- Incorrect/wrong equipment disconnected
- Irregular signal sequence
- Irregular train movement
- Level crossing user authorised to cross with insufficient time
- Line blockage authorised with a train in section on approach to site of work
- Line left unsafe following work activity
- Moved outside protection limits without authority
- Near miss (between person and train)
- Equipment fell on running line
- Pedestrian/vehicle trapped on/in level crossing
- Points set wrongly
- Protection incorrectly applied or not removed
- Staff working in a live section
- Switching error
- Train called at station without authority
- Train entered/exited possession/worksite without authority
- Train entered/in service in a defective state
- Train loaded incorrectly
- Train moved without authority
- Wrong route given but only where:
 - Train signalled into a line blockage
 - Train signalled into a possession
 - Train signalled into an isolated section
 - Train signalled into occupied platform / restricted
 - Train signalled into section without route clearance
- Train stood foul of a platform
- Train/plant over level crossing without authority
- Train/plant over level crossing with barriers incorrectly operated
- Train/vehicle door locking irregularity
- Train/vehicle door open irregularity
- Trolley/vehicle runaway
- Two trains in a block section
- Warning board not placed
- Working in a 'Red Zone Prohibited' area