NetworkRail

Standard 019 – Safe Every Time

Step 4: Change Control

everyone home safe every day

Dear all,

Today, as part of my safety update – I wanted to note White Ribbon Day, which yesterday marked the start of 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, and the part we can all play in making sure our female colleagues and passengers feel safe, secure and seen. The White Ribbon is the recognised symbol for ending male violence against women, including domestic abuse, harassment, and assault. The sad reality is most violence against women is perpetrated by men. Whether that is a partner, ex-partner, colleague, or stranger.

How stark are these statistics, and how do they make you feel?

**Rob Cairns,
Regional Managing Director**

- Three in five women have experienced sexual harassment, bullying or verbal abuse in the workplace. (Trade Unions Congress, 2023)

- 58 % of women aged 16-34 report feeling fairly or very unsafe using public transport alone after dark (ONS 2023)

- 63 % of men agree that men in society aren't doing enough to ensure the safety of women and girls. (YouGov, 2021)

You may recall I was heartened earlier this year when Secretary of State for Transport Louise Haigh identified a clear link between tackling violence for women, and a safe and reliable transport network – a priority identified only weeks before in our regional health and safety strategy.

There are links between a safe organisation, a safe culture, diversity of thought and the recognition of barriers such as violence towards women in order to promote these priorities. We all have a part to play,

whether that's calling out poor behaviour wherever we may be - in the office, on-site or on public transport - or even by just looking at our own actions and ensuring we are providing the right environment for everyone to live without the fear of violence. The theme of White Ribbon Day 2024 is 'It Starts With Men'. We're encouraging men to hold themselves accountable to women, and to each other so we can affect positive behaviour change.

The theme I wanted to give to this week's safety update was the 4th pillar of our 019 track worker safety focus – Change control.

I firstly wanted to thank the many of you who reached out to me directly over the last two weekly updates providing me with much-welcomed feedback and reflections.

Many of you were urging me to not underestimate the risk brought about by complacency, particularly for teams who work together regularly, and when similar tasks in similar locations are performed over and over again. My attention was also brought to those team members who feel like they can't always speak out through fear of reprisal or recourse – this was saddening to me, as I don't believe we can have a truly safe culture, which doesn't include people speaking openly about not only actual risks, but potential risks. Hazards that may never actually materialise, but being able to consider them is a key ingredient to being the safest we can be.

After confirming, checking and challenging our safe systems during the planning stages – our attention should very much turn to making sure we understand and can deal with any changes which occur immediately before starting work, which may have a bearing on people still being able to work safely whilst on site.

Even the most minor modification against the planned tasks or staff changes can introduce new risks to site.

Our reality here is that we live in an environment of constant change, underlining our need to be capable and ready to live with it, and deal with it. Changes can range from staff being stuck in traffic, colleagues coming to work stressed with family issues, or even materials being at a different location - all the way through to isolation limits or weather conditions.

There are a number of factors in effective change control.

> **Clear communication:** Changes must be communicated properly across all levels of the team. If the Person in Charge (PIC) isn't informed about changes to the SSoW, or if there is miscommunication between the planner, RM, and team members, this can lead to outdated or inappropriate safety measures being used.

> **Take your time:** In many situations, there is pressure to complete tasks quickly. This can lead to rushed decisions or the temptation to bypass formal change control processes. However, skipping these steps increases the risk of accidents, as new hazards may not be properly mitigated.

> **Reassess the risks:** Any deviation from the planned SSoW requires a reassessment of risks, and the PIC must verify the new conditions before continuing. Failing to do this introduces the risk of unidentified hazards.

Double check: The complexity of managing SSoW can sometimes lead to errors, especially when multiple parties are involved. Oversights in checking whether the hierarchy of control still applies after changes are made can create a weak link in the safety process.

What happens if it goes wrong?

If change control isn't properly implemented or fails, there's a higher chance of our teams being exposed to unassessed hazards, leading to accidents, injuries, or even fatalities.

Systems can fail. For example, a change in protection or warning systems that are not communicated or properly authorised could result in miscoordination between staff and equipment, compromising safety measures such as lookout duties or isolation requirements.

Failing to follow the processes outlined in 019 can result in non-compliance with safety regulations. This exposes us to legal action, fines, and reputational damage; especially if the oversight leads to injury or death.

Ineffective management of changes can also disrupt operations by forcing work stoppages, leading to delays, cost overruns and productivity losses.

Please continue to share with me your thoughts on this crucial safety focus – you may reply directly to me if you wish.

Stay safe,

Rob

This update is provided by the Wales and Western Communications team. For any queries, please contact walesandwesterncomms@networkrail.co.uk