

# Standard 019 - Safe Every Time



everyone  
home safe  
every day

## Step 2: Checking

Dear all,

Last week's message is being sent this week, and that's testimony to how hectic last week became – so apologies in my lateness, no excuses!

I wanted to start by thanking everyone who contacts me directly, and it's pleasing to see how many frontline teams are finding time to read my notes and wanting to discuss them.

At the beginning of last week, I spent my train journey reading through the details of a number of our recent trackworker near misses.



**Rob Cairns,**  
**Regional Managing Director**

I wanted to take some time to reflect on what had happened within each of these incidents – to try to imagine the real-life pressures and events which led to people finding themselves within these unsafe conditions in the way they did. I felt that, without the chance to really understand, I couldn't be sure that I was doing everything I possibly could to embed the learning and keep our people as safe as possible. I targeted the train journey as it allowed me some time to really read the details behind each.

Here are a few of my thoughts and findings from looking through our stats. Firstly, there were 27 near misses nationally in the 12 months to 31 March 2024, and there's been 18 in the first seven periods of this current reporting year. Within Wales and Western, there were six separate near-miss incidents between 1 April 2023 and the end of October 2024. These occurred with our capital delivery (3), maintenance (1), and operations (2) teams.

For so many reasons, it's important to me that we do everything in our power to learn from these incidents, as without us holding them at the front of our minds, we lower the likelihood of remembering the lessons, and increase the likelihood of making the same mistakes again.

I've abbreviated the summary of our regional near-miss incidents, simply for ease.

1. Train struck marker board
2. On track without line blockage
3. Line blockage with train in section
4. On track without permission
5. Signaller missed train dealing with COSS
6. On track without line blockage

Although each of these near-miss events was subject to its own local complexities, there are a small number of features that are consistent within each, including the desire of those involved simply to deliver the work asked of them. The second area that stood out was how the presence of small errors in planning can become big problems when out on site, and although it's a slight generalisation, I observed around half of all of our near-miss incidents being in some way linked to how the safe limits of the Safe System of Work (SSOW) were planned, or identified, when out on site. This really reinforces to me the opportunity and power of having our safe work packs checked, both during the planning and also when arriving on site, to see if anything has changed.

I often look at rail incidents and consider how the majority of cases involve a small number of failure modes which repeat themselves time and time over – and it reinforces the importance of us taking steps to capture and implement lessons. The power of checking SSOW paperwork, not just for accuracy of detail, but checking for understanding of those involved in the planning, and carrying out of, the work.

It's with these reflections in mind that I wanted to use this week's update to remind everyone of the 'four Cs' that make up the pillars of our 019 Standard safety campaign, which focuses on stronger **confirming, checking and challenging**, and making sure we **control and manage changes** to our planned work on or near the track.

I've previously looked in detail the first step – Confirming. Put simply, has the Person in Charge (PIC) of the work reviewed the Safe System of Work (SSOW)? This week, I want to focus on the second – **Checking**: When working on or near the track, have you checked that the safe work limits are clearly understood, and recognisable to everyone who needs to rely on them? It's critical that the Controller of Site Safety (COSS), who may also be the Person in Charge (PIC), briefs the team on the safe work limits as defined by the SSOW. In summary, clear communication and understanding of safe work limits are crucial for ensuring the safety of all our teams.

In the way I've done in previous updates, I wanted to close by linking back to a number of our overarching Health & Safety commitments. Although the outcomes of the four Cs are themselves reasonably clear, it's the means by which we bring the 'how' to life each day. I've spoken a great deal within the region and in my weekly messages about 'decency' and that being a guide for how we set about a day-to-day basis. One of the really vital parts of bringing the four Cs to life is that we speak really plainly about:

- Giving ourselves the ability to plan, so that we pace ourselves and use our energies effectively.
- Being aware that, as humans, we are programmed to notice the things that aren't routine to us, and at the same time programmed to stop noticing the things that don't change.
- Recognising the duty we each have to fully understand the challenges of those on the front line.

- Our people being given the psychological safety for their rest and downtime to be planned and respected – there is never unspoken or implied obligation for people to neglect proper rest.

You will be hearing more from me on these topics moving forward. But, for now, please continue to share your thoughts, and let me know how we can bring this to life and make it much more 'business as usual' with what we automatically do each day. You can [reply directly to me](#) if you wish – I look forward to hearing from you.

Stay safe,

Rob

This update is provided by the Wales and Western Communications team. For any queries, please contact [walesandwesterncomms@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:walesandwesterncomms@networkrail.co.uk)



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