

Safety Advice

Action required following a serious incident

Failure of 7 sleeper lifting spacer beam

Issued to: All Network Rail line managers and RISQS registered contractors

Ref: NRA 16/08

Date of issue: 13/07/2016

Location: Newlands

Contact: [Malcolm Miles](#), Principal Plant Engineer



Overview

Whilst carrying out track relaying works, sleepers were being lifted on to a rail wagon utilising a 7 sleeper lifting/spacer beam. As the sleepers were being lowered on the wagon, the beam failed, dropping the sleepers onto the wagon. Fortunately, due to the exclusion zone that had been created, nobody was injured.

The beam failed because the retaining plate bolts on the square rotor stem became loose and slackened off, eventually falling out. The bolts have plain washers fitted, not spring washers.

Following a similar incident in 2011, the manufacturers (GOS Engineering) issued a Safety Bulletin NR-03-03-11-01 which suggested using thread lock or wire locking but did not include any guidance on the appropriate inspection and maintenance regime to be put in place.

It appears that thread lock may have been used on the beam that failed.

Immediate action required

- Prior to any intended use of similar sleeper Lifting/Spacer beams carry out an inspection of the retaining plates and ensure that they are of the correct type and grade, including the washer type and grade as detailed in the operating and maintenance manual.
- Ensure that the bolts are correctly tightened and that wire locking or thread lock is correctly applied.
- All machine operators and crane controllers using similar equipment must be briefed on the need to ensure that the bolts are checked as part of their pre-use checks.
- This action is to be undertaken by all Asset Owners and users of the 7 sleeper lifting/spacer beam.
- Details of any other 7 sleeper Lifting/spacer beams found to have incorrectly fitted bolts and washers to be notified to: malcolm.miles2@networkrail.co.uk
- GOS Engineering are to produce a service bulletin reminding users of the content of Safety Bulletin NR-03-03-11-01 and confirm the type and grade of bolts and washer to be fitted.
- GOS Engineering are to amend the maintenance manual specifying the frequency at which the bolts are to be inspected, a specific task is also to be incorporated into the maintenance plan GOS engineering to provide an alternative method for locking the securing bolts in place.

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