

Safe isolations – access and competence

Issued to: **Network Rail line managers, safety professionals and accredited contractors**

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Never undertake any job unless you have been trained and assessed as competent.

Overview

The National Health, Safety & Welfare Council has agreed the need to clarify the rules about isolations. Two unsafe practices were discussed:

- Isolation teams, for both Overhead Line Equipment (OLE) and Conductor Rail, undertaking isolation duties on or near the line before suitable possession protection is in place;
- Staff not holding Authorised Person or Nominated Person competence carrying out OLE isolation duties, e.g. earthing, testing and switching.

NR/L2/OHS/019 requires possession protection arrangements to be in place before allowing anyone on or near the line to carry out earthing or strapping.

Isolation duties requiring you to go on or near the line must wait until the possession protection is in place and you have been authorised by the Person in Charge of Possession (PICOP), this will usually be via the Engineer Supervisor (ES). Preparatory work can be undertaken if you are not on or near the line.

Planners should make sure that isolation teams have the correct contact details for the PICOP and ES. Site plans must allow sufficient time for the isolation teams to do their work safely.

Network Rail's isolation process, NR/L3/ELP/29987, mandates that only persons holding an Authorised Person or Nominated Person competence can carry out testing, earthing/shorting and switching. Where a second person is there for safe working, only the competent person may do the isolation tasks.

Immediate action required

1. Only carry out activities that you are trained and competent to do.
2. Only go on or near this line to carry out isolation duties when you have had confirmation from the PICOP the possession is granted.

3. Plans must allow sufficient time for isolation to be done safely.