

# Standard 019 - Safe Every Time

## Step 1: Confirming



everyone  
home safe  
every day

Dear all

For those that had chance to catch last week's message, I spelled a diversion away from my previous theme of leadership priorities, towards a distinct focus on sophisticating the focus we place on track worker safety controls.

If I think about some of my leadership priorities discussed over the summer, they are, of course, however linked. I spoke in both our Health & Safety Strategy, and more recently in my updates about a number of leadership pillars which all of our safety outcomes are most likely to rest. To re-cap on a few of these:



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

- Giving people the ability to plan and prepare, so we use our energies effectively.
- Remembering we are programmed to notice the things that aren't routine, and not noticing the things that are.
- Knowing that a safe organisation at its very heart must be one where people can have their viewpoints heard.
- Perhaps the most difficult - plain speaking. Actively tackling and reducing anything that results in people feeling as though they cannot stand up and say the things which the majority of the organisation otherwise know to be true.
- The boldest safety leadership is likely to pose itself as the most unpopular, but being comfortable in the knowledge that this contradiction is likely to require us to deal with the vested interests out there who would seek to have us believe in things that the mass of the population don't accept.

Put in its simplest format, this means our safety outcomes are so precious to us that there is nothing worth letting get in the way of them, as there is not a single person in our workforce whose health and wellness is worth taking any risk of complacency on.

This shift in my focus stems from a strong belief in good assurance as the best basis for informed decision-making which links directly to the extra lens I wish to bring to our safety culture by evolving this into a mindset of curiosity, and the balance between the ingredients of the power of doubt and the importance of making an enemy of complacency.

Last week, I promised you would hear more from me about the need for a significant focus on linking our culture to our safe systems of working trackside. I explained why and how our focus must shift towards much stronger **confirming**, **checking** and **challenging**, and making sure we **control** and manage changes to our plans, so that everyone gets home safe every day.

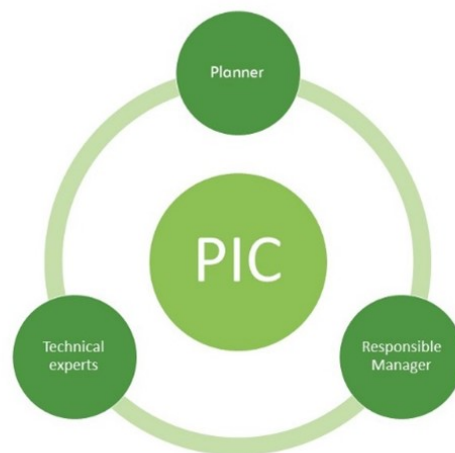
This week, I want to take a detailed look at the first of those ‘four Cs’ – **Confirming** – and how it plays a crucial part in how we meet Standard 019, a critical safety procedure when working on or near the line.

**Confirming** can be summed up in one simple question: Has the Person in Charge (PIC) of the work reviewed the Safe System of Work (SSOW)?

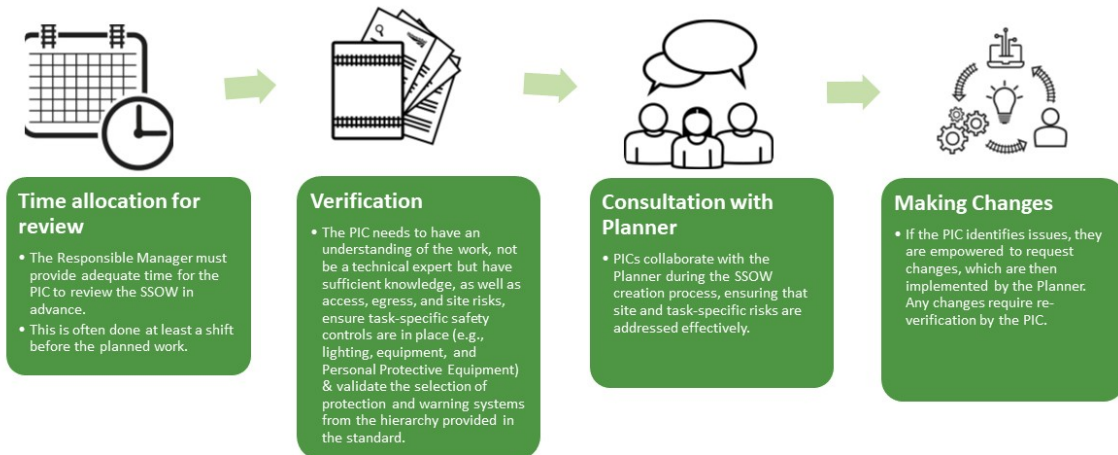
A key issue picked up in previous assurance reports is that PICs may not be sufficiently involved during the early stages of planning work. This lack of engagement can lead to insufficient risk assessment.

PICs have a vital role in maintaining the safety of the team under their control. They should work with the Planner to make sure the SSOW pack accurately reflects the risks and controls for the task at hand. After the SSOW has been reviewed, it should be verified and authorised by the Responsible Manager (RM).

Where necessary, PICs should consult with technical experts who have specialist knowledge, such as engineers or safety officers, for specific risk assessments.



The chart below shows how PICs can review and suggest changes to the SSOW before the work begins. While PICs can ask for changes, they cannot authorise them, so a timely response is needed from the RM or others involved to avoid delays.



When reviewing the SSOW, the PIC should focus on the following elements to make sure they have comprehensively covered every aspect of safety.

	<p><b>Task-Specific Risks</b></p> <p>Ensure that risks associated with the specific task (e.g., working at height, equipment use) are properly mitigated.</p>
	<p><b>Site-Specific Risks</b></p> <p>Confirm risks related to the worksite, such as proximity to live tracks, access routes, and environmental hazards (e.g., weather conditions, runaway risks) are appropriately controlled.</p>
	<p><b>Operational Risks</b></p> <p>Ensure that any risk that might affect the safe running of the railway (e.g., train movement, electrical hazards) is covered by suitable control measures.</p>
	<p><b>Hierarchy of Control</b></p> <p>Verify that the correct hierarchy of control has been followed, starting from the safest possible system down to lower levels if absolutely necessary, and ensure justifications for moving down the hierarchy are valid.</p>
	<p><b>Welfare Provisions</b></p> <p>Ensure that welfare facilities, including gender-specific needs, are available on site.</p>

The importance of the PIC being involved early in the planning progress is demonstrated by examples such as this: A planned safe system relied on a human lookout rather than more effective automated warning systems. Due to the poor risk assessment and incorrect hierarchy of control selection, the workgroup was exposed to unnecessary risks from passing trains.

This resulted in work stoppages, leading to significant delays and near-miss incidents. The PIC had not been involved early enough in the planning process to put these issues right before work commenced. Proper collaboration between PICs, planners, and RMs ensures thorough risk identification, suitable control measures, and a higher level of safety for all team members.

We know that PICs may face potential barriers when reviewing the SSOW. In some cases, they may not have had time before the start of the shift, especially in emergency or last-minute situations. Unforeseen

changes on site or last-minute adjustments to scope will mean a rapid reassessment.

We must work together to overcome these barriers to make sure we are working in the safest possible way on site, reducing risk from the outset. We should always ask ourselves: Once again, who actually is that person in our workforce whose health and wellness it's worth taking the risk of complacency on?

If you want to find out more, Western route's track workforce safety team is running 019 and PIC assurance workshops. The next one is on Tuesday 22 October at our Bristol Parkway Training Centre. There are just a few spaces left, so please contact Donna Reigate, our head of track workforce safety & planning, to book yours.

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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