Safety Bulletin

A serious incident has taken place

everyone
home safe
every day

Paddington station evacuation - fire alarm set off by UPS batteries

Issued to: **All Network Rail line managers, safety professionals and RISQS registered contractors**

Ref: NRB 17/14

Date of issue: 21/07/2017

Location: Paddington Station, London

Contact: Alan Ratcliffe, Station Safety Advisor

Overview

At 19:36 on the 12 July 2017 Paddington Station was fully evacuated following the fire alarm being activated on multiple detectors.

Inspection identified the smell of electrical burning from Plant Room 29a. Using a heat detection gun the London Fire Brigade determined the source was a UPS (Uninterruptible Power Supply) that was over-heating causing its batteries to fuse together.

The room is normally cooled with an air conditioner unit. The latter was in a failed state and had been for four weeks with inadequate mitigation measures.

Although loss of the air conditioning will have played a part in the event it is not the sole underlying reason. Investigations to identify further underlying causes have already started.

The station was closed while the fire brigade dealt with the issue and subsequently while Network Rail staff ensured the station was safe to open to staff and public. Train services to and from Paddington were disrupted for over 3 hours.

The closure led to other stations on the route becoming overcrowded and passengers left on stationary trains for long periods of time.

During the evacuation and subsequent closure of the station to the public the amount of calls being made to essential and non-essential staff added some complication in control and support of the incident.

Discussion Points

While we are investigating the incident please discuss the following with your team.

- how do you consider the actions that you take when equipment is broken or faulty? How might these compromise the operation of other equipment in the area?
- When repairs to restore equipment are not immediate, how do you consider whether temporary mitigation is necessary, and then assess its effectiveness?

- How do we control off-site staff communications into live incidents without distracting the management of the incident itself?
- Out of core hours what provisions are in place for escalation of events at our locations?

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