

Train strikes rail at Cradlehall on the Highland Mainline

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

Ref: NRB 18/05

Date of issue: 21/03/2018

Location: Cradlehall, Highland Mainline

Contact: [Simon Constable](#), Head of Route Safety, Health and Environment, Scotland Route



Footage from train mounted FFCCTV

Overview

On 25 February, the 09:40hrs Inverness - London Kings Cross Virgin Trains East Coast service, that was the first train after a possession, struck a length of rail which had been left resting on the head of the cess rail.

The train struck the rail at 53mph and forced the 425ft length of rail into the cess. The train did not derail and damage to the rolling stock was confined to the lifeguard on the leading bogie.

The rail was identified during a possession the previous night as being too close to the down cess rail and was moved with a road rail vehicle. The machine controller was requested to move the rail further into the down cess but the machine operator moved the rail into the up four foot.

The northern end of the rail was inadvertently left sitting on top of the up cess running rail. This error remained undetected until the passenger train hit the rail.

It is clear from the preliminary investigation that a number of required formal exchanges did not take place to establish that the site was clear and safe for trains to run. In particular, the Person in Charge did not complete the required section of the Safe Work Pack.

Procedures for checking the line after work were strengthened last year through the Planning & Delivering Safe Work arrangements following similar incidents where trains struck tools at Farningham Road, a signalling cabinet door in Watford Tunnel, tools in Alderton Tunnel and a sleeper at Somerleyton,

Discussion Points

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

- How are your worksites planned to be as short as possible so that the Engineering Supervisor can effectively supervise?
- How is the safety of the line checked by a method, or methods, appropriate for the activities undertaken before the Engineering Supervisor permits lines to be returned to service?
- How do we plan our resources so that every Person in Charge (PIC) are able to be present at the site of work, overseeing the work of their team?
- How do we assure that the PIC has checked all of their site of work and signed a declaration that the track is safe and ready for service trains?
- How does the Engineering Supervisor assure themselves that the line is safe and clear for the passage of trains before they hand back their worksite?

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