

Operational close call: line blockage error

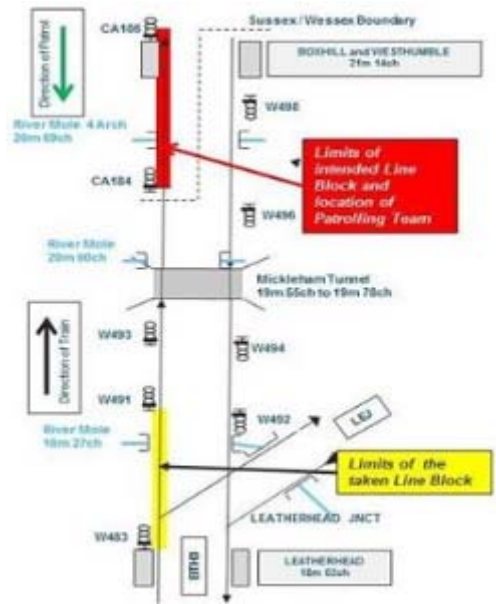
Issued to: All Network Rail line managers, safety professionals and RISQS registered contractors

Ref: NRB 18/09

Date of issue: 15/05/2018

Location: River Mole Four Arch underbridge near Boxhill, Surrey

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Overview

On 27 March whilst carrying out a routine track inspection at the River Mole Four Arch underbridge a patrolling team of four were crossing a limited clearance structure believed to be under a line blockage when a passenger train unexpectedly approached their position on the Down line.

The advanced lookout was ahead of the team, saw the train approaching, warned the other members and all reached a position of safety in time for the train to pass their position without further incident.

The COSS had requested and been granted a line blockage in a different location, on the same line but two miles away, this being protection planned to be taken later in the patrol.

This was a moving worksite, a number of consecutive line blockages had been planned to provide protection for the team while crossing restricted clearance structures. Local names of the structures are similar: River Mole Four Arch and River Mole Bridge.

The direction of the track patrol had been reversed at short notice, as had the order in which line blockages were to be taken. This information was passed to the Person in Charge and COSS early in the shift. The COSS had just completed his probationary period.

The PIC & COSS had received a number of separate Safe Work Packs (SWP) for the task of a single track patrol.

Discussion Points

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

- As a COSS taking a Line Blockage how do you confirm you are in the right location?
- What changes made to an existing 'Cyclic SWP' would require it to be *verified* and *authorised* before use.
- How could suitable safety critical communications avoid these circumstances?
- How would you mentor a probationary COSS, do you understand what is involved?
- Are you aware one SWP can contain up to ten consecutive systems of work including multiple planned line blockages?

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