

No: NRS 345

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## Network Rail Safety Bulletin

### Use of Sleeper Spacers (Grabs, Lifters)

**For the attention of: All staff involved in the planning, undertaking of lifting operations, site monitoring of works (POS) and maintenance of Sleeper Spacers (Grabs, Lifters)**

#### Background:

On Tuesday 25 November a team of track workers were using a 360 excavator to unload concrete sleepers from a flatbed lorry in Galashiels, Scotland. The excavator was fitted with a 'sleeper spacer' attachment modified into a 'sleeper grab'.

Several groups of sleepers were successfully lifted from the lorry to the adjacent track bed, but during a subsequent lift one of the sleepers slipped from the grab resulting in a serious crush injury to a member of staff. Initial investigations suggest that the IP had moved into the lifting zone to remove the wooden dunnage from the lorry deck.



The injured person was admitted to hospital, and has subsequently had his lower leg amputated as a result of the crush injury.

#### Immediate action required:

- All sleeper spacers that have been modified for use as sleeper grabs must be withdrawn from use;
- Only approved sleeper grabs and sleeper spacer attachments are to be used for handling multiple sleepers, and only within their design limits.
- A thorough pre-use check of lifting plant and attachments must be undertaken before checking specifically for defects and any missing bolts or components;
- The lifting attachment must have been thoroughly examined (and have LOLER certification) within last 6 months;
- The 'last maintained' service tag must be within the manufacturers prescribed maintenance interval;
- Machine Operators must be trained and deemed competent in the use of sleeper grab and sleeper spacer attachments;
- Exclusion zones must be maintained during all lifting operations;
- Duplex communications equipment is required between the Machine Operator and Crane Controller/Banksman.

Users are reminded that the requirements for planning, operating and maintaining attachments are contained within the Infrastructure Plant Manual NR/PLANT/0200.



Never enter the agreed exclusion zone, unless directed to by the person in charge.



Always use the equipment that is fit for its intended purpose



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