

Safety Bulletin

A serious incident has taken place

Rail lifting beam failure

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

Ref: NRB 15/11

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Location: Borders Rail Project, Scotland

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A rail beam tilt rotator

Overview

On 14 May 2015 a rail beam, being used to lift a 60ft section of rail, failed when the bolts securing the hitch adaptor plate to the main beam were stripped of their thread.

Reports indicate that the operator of the road rail excavator crane was attempting to lift a section of rail from the end, rather than in the centre as required by the Infrastructure Plant Manual NR/PLANT/0200/module P517.

It was possible to attempt the operation in this manner due to the beam being directly fitted to the tilt rotator, rather than the rotator being fitted to the dipper nose pin or via a flexible intermediate linkage onto an approved lifting point.

Lifting rail in this manner is not permitted as it will overload the lifting components and may cause complete failure as occurred in this instance.

Discussion Points

Whilst we are fully investigating the causes of this incident please discuss the following with your teams:

- Our lifesaving rules state: 'Always be sure the required plans are in place before you start a job or go on or near the line' and 'Always use equipment that is fit for its intended purpose'
- How should these rules be applied to an item of lifting equipment?
- How can Crane Controllers ensure that lifts have been planned correctly utilising the correct lifting equipment?
- How can we ensure that lifting equipment is being used correctly?
- What can we do to ensure that loads are correctly attached to the lifting equipment?