

20th August 2013

**No: NRS 292**

## **Safe System of Work – Line Blockages**

**For the attention of *all staff involved in planning and executing of line blockages on Infrastructure Projects***

### **Background:**

Following a Network Rail review of Operational Close Call data between April and August this year, it has been identified that a significant number of incidents have taken place with Line Blockages involving our Contractors.

From these reports we have identified the following areas where the Network Rail Standard - Safety of People Working On or Near the Line NR/L2/OHS/019 has not been complied with:-

- Responsible Managers are not aware or not complying with their roles and responsibilities for validating Safe System of Work packs.
- Responsible Managers are not always checking that the nominated COSS is familiar with the site location, type of work being undertaken and protection arrangements required. If they are not, then familiarisation shall take place prior to commencing the work.
- COSS's are being allowed to take Line Blockages when not being familiar with the site.
- COSS's are not receiving their Safe System of Works Packs (SSWOP) at least one shift in advance of the planned works.
- COSS's are not validating the planners SSOW to identify and then challenge any errors.
- COSS's should sign off SSOW packs and not use digital signatures.
- Failure by competent staff to place protection at the correct blocking point or upon completion of works, lift the protection.
- COSS's have been found not to be on site at the place of work.

***Poor communication between all key parties (Signallers, Protection Controllers and COSS's) when agreeing and implementing a line blockage.***

### **Immediate Action Required by all persons affected:**

1. Communicate the above issues to all Contractors responsible managers, planning staff and for ongoing cascade to their Safety Critical Staff involved in the planning and executing of Safe Systems of Work on the railway.
2. Contractors need to review current processes to assure themselves of their compliance with the Network Rail Standard - Safety of People Working On or Near the Line NR/L2/OHS/019 in particular taking into account the issues set out in this safety bulletin above.

**Line Managers should reiterate to all COSS's the Life Saving Rule:**

**“Always have a valid safe system of work in place before going on or near the line”**

