

Manual handling injury leads to ORR improvement notice

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

Ref: NRB 18/07

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Location: Western Ave near Cardiff

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Overview

On 21 January 2018 an accident occurred whilst Works Delivery were undertaking a steel sleeper track renewal. While manually handling a steel sleeper a contractor colleague trapped a finger on his right hand which resulted in an open fracture and damage to the nail bed.

The colleague was part of a two person operation to lift steel sleepers from stock piles and place them onto the ballast.

The primary method for placing out sleepers was using a tracked machine with a sleeper lifting attachment. As works had fallen behind schedule colleagues from another worksite were asked to support. In an attempt to recover lost time the additional staff were tasked with manually placing out sleepers; this method of work was not part of the original risk assessment. The sleepers weighed in excess of 80kg each.

To undertake the task two colleagues were positioned one at each end of the sleeper; the sleepers were being lifted and thrown into position on the ballast. When carrying out the particular lift the activity was not done in tandem and resulted in one end of the sleeper being lowered before the other, this caused the injured person's finger to be trapped between the sleeper being moved and the remainder of the pack. No sleeper nips were available to be used.

As a result of an ORR investigation an Improvement Notice has been issued to Works Delivery Wales Route, due to the lack of a suitable and sufficient manual handling risk assessment for the newly employed task. It is noted in the ORR report that it is the inspector's opinion that other functions may be in the same or similar positions across Network Rail when carrying out this type of works.

Discussion Points

Whilst further investigation and compliance actions are being completed for the ORR improvement notice, please discuss the following with your team:

- When site work falls behind or is not going to plan, how can the local risks be assessed to prevent injuries occurring?
- How are the task risks briefed to you, before and during the works?
- How can you maintain supervision and control of colleagues during tasks, especially when they start at differing times during the work, including being briefed correctly?
- How do you check that labour only sub-contractor staff have the appropriate basic training and are briefed correctly before starting work?
- How do you make sure that you have the correct assessments in place for your work and being complied with?

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