

RIDDOR Dangerous Occurrence - Signalling wrong side failure

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

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Location: Up Doncaster line between Knottingley South and Haywood Junctions, LNE/EM Route

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Overview

In August 2018, during work to renew four Automatic Half Barrier level crossings, problems with a data changeover occurred. During the overnight possession a decision was taken to revert to using some original wiring. When that wiring was recommissioned, 'track circuit clear' conditions were omitted from the controls for an automatic signal.

This omission caused the signal to display a proceed aspect whilst trains were still within the signal section ahead. The mistake was found 11 days after the old wiring was reinstated and commissioned.

Underlying causes

- Assumptions were made about compatibility of electronic systems and data
- There were no planned contingencies for data changeover issues despite similar experiences on other projects
- The independence between installation and testing was compromised
- Testers made assumptions about the extent of testing being undertaken by others
- Installation took place without labelling or clear drawings; useful diagrams and materials were removed from site before the works were complete
- Perceived time pressure to return the railway into service in a timely manner contributed to the decisions made on site

Key message

Signalling wrong-side failures have the potential for catastrophic consequences as they result in the infrastructure being in an unsafe state.

In this example, the discipline of the Signalling Works Testing Handbook (SWTH) procedure to control that risk was not followed.

Re-planning of works needs to acknowledge that the full SWTH testing must always happen.

How could you use contingency planning to anticipate similar failures and avoid last minute decisions?

How can you learn from other failures and close calls to improve the effectiveness of risk control in your work?

When work doesn't go to plan:

- Who is responsible for ensuring all processes are followed?
- Who is responsible for risk assessing the change to plans?
- Who is responsible for re-planning the work?
- Who is responsible for making sure that all the necessary information is available on site?
- How are new / late plans communicated?
- What support is available to those delivering the work?