

Safety Advice

Action required following a serious incident



Wooden poles on the railway infrastructure

Issued to: **Network Rail line managers, safety professionals and accredited contractors**

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Overview

A passenger train recently hit a wooden pole that had fallen onto the line. This bulletin contains a brief overview of the incident and provides initial findings and recommendations.

This incident was reported by a driver whose train stopped after striking the pole, which was blocking both lines. It was a redundant lighting pole that had failed due to heavy rotting at its base.

Further investigation revealed that this pole had been recently inspected and recommended for removal several times on grounds of its age and condition.

This finding has led to an urgent review of Route structural examination and escalation processes.

It has since been ascertained that there are likely to be other similar assets on the infrastructure (both on main lines and depots or sidings) that present danger due to their age and condition and should be removed.

It has also been established that ownership of these assets may not be clear in all cases.

Immediate action required

The following measures are being undertaken by Wales and Western Region and must also be taken across other Regions:

- Route databases to be reviewed to identify any similar structures in dangerous condition (rotting, fatigued or poorly secured) that require removal.
- Further investigation is also required to determine any unrecorded or unowned assets that pose a similar risk.
- Affected structures to be prioritised for removal from Network Rail infrastructure based on defect safety criticality.
- Review Route processes for reporting and escalation of train safety hazards to Route Control.

Discussion points

- What wooden assets could be similarly affected in your Route?
- How effective are your processes for prioritising action when defects are found?
- What would you do if you found a rotten or unstable pole on the lineside?
- How does your assurance check the effectiveness of asset inspection and resolving defects?