

Clear possession communications

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

Ref: NRL20-08

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Location: Down Polmont to Grahamston line, Scotland

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Overview

A freight train driver, travelling from Polmont to Carlisle North Yard, was authorised by the Engineering Supervisor (ES), responsible for movements within a worksite, to proceed to the Worksite Marker Board (WSMB), over a mile away, in readiness for departing the worksite. The WSMB was placed on the approach to the Protection Limit Board (PLB) and adjacent to detonator protection.

The possession protection arrangements were adequately communicated and the driver proceeded at a speed above the limit permitted for travelling within a worksite.

Consequently, the driver failed to stop at the WSMB, ran through the WSMB, the PLB and came to a stand approximately 20 metres beyond the published possession exit and protecting signal.

Communications between the possession staff, including the ES, and the driver were not recorded. Subsequent investigation determined that recognised protocols to facilitate understanding and confirmation of safety critical information were not robustly used by either the ES or the driver prior to the incident occurring.

Underlying causes

The ES and the driver failed to establish a clear understanding regarding the location of the WSMB.

The driver and the ES failed to agree an appropriate speed at which to proceed to the WSMB.

The driver failed to observe Rule Book requirements for operating within a possession and proceeded in excess of the permitted maximum speed when travelling within a worksite.

Key message

How are you complying with the requirements of NR/L3/MTC/MG017 regarding recording safety critical communications?

How are you complying with the requirements of NR/L2/OPS/033 standard regarding recording possession communications?

In the absence of recorded communications, how would you satisfy yourself that safety critical staff are observing appropriate communication protocols?

What will your next Safety Conversation be about?

Always observe current and future versions of:

GE/RT8000-HB12 – Duties of the Engineering Supervisor (ES) or Safe Work Leader (SWL) in a possession

GE/RT8000 – Possession of a running line for engineering work - Drivers Duties Part 9

In August 2015 a serious freight train collision in a possession at Logan was fortunate not to injure anyone but caused extensive network disruption. How are we continuing to learn the lessons of previous incidents?