

# Getting ready for the hot weather season



everyone  
home safe  
every day

Hello everyone,

Today, I want to discuss the importance of being ready for the hot weather season. Running trains on time and getting everyone home safe every day are two of our key priorities in Wales and Western. Extremely hot weather can affect both, and so it's really important that we all work together to be ready.

What we do know, is that our railway can often respond in unwanted ways when the weather gets really hot – and it's with that in mind that we have to identify our commitment for readiness in advance. A stranded train which is busy is never a pleasant experience whatever the time of year, but a stranded train in extreme heat can pose danger to those on board.



**Rob Cairns,**  
Regional Managing Director

The risks faced by our infrastructure during extreme heat are numerous, ranging from the most obvious which is rail buckles as metal expands, and overhead lines sagging and no longer being taut enough to feed the trains all the way through, to signalling equipment getting hot and failing to work.

We have experienced several incidents this year already, which resulted in unacceptable circumstances for passengers, however, were they to have happened during extreme heat the experience and risk to those passengers would have been unthinkable.

## **My priorities for this summer are:**

- Making sure we think ahead, and don't allow a very hot day in June or July to be a surprise to us.
- Make sure we don't leave most of the effort and worry to teams on the very front lines, be those our DU staff, track teams or MOMs – that's just not fair.
- Make sure we have contingency plans that are 'real' so that if something does go wrong, we have a scripted plan which thinks about passenger experience first and foremost.
- Making sure we think around the very edges – and what I mean by this is how we consider high levels of staff annual leave, coupled with increased numbers of highly-laden leisure travellers with

scenarios such as platform overcrowding, station lift operation, passenger information etc.

We know there is a very direct link between the quality of our scenario planning, and the lived experience of the passengers on the day. The greater the scenario details, the more likely we deliver a better outcome.

Preparing and maintaining our 3319 miles of track and 3133 S&C units to cope with hot weather is a considerable task, and not a mean feat for our maintenance colleagues. For the track engineers, being ready means minimising the number of sites with infrastructure non-compliance issue. This includes ensuring that rail joints are suitably adjusted and lubricated to allow thermal expansion, that continuously welded rail is stressed, and that there is sufficient ballast to stop it buckling. One of the more unusual things we sometimes need to do is paint the rails white to reflect the heat away to keep them cool! When necessary, we will also put speed restrictions in place. This helps to reduce the forces on the track, meaning it's less likely to buckle.

The past few years has seen an increase in the use of technology to help manage the effects of hot weather. One example is remote temperature monitoring, where sensors monitor the track temperature and send alerts when it reaches a certain level. This equipment reduces the need for 'boots on ballast' and allows a better response when rail temperatures are rising.

On the warmest days, forecasting the risks from high rail temperatures and managing their impact on operations and performance is a daily task for both route controls. They are responsible for making sure the routes deliver a safe and reliable train service. The involvement of the seasons' delivery teams reinforces this effort, through the delivery of their pre-season activities.

Working together as one team to be prepared for this challenge is what really makes the difference. No matter what your role, can I ask everyone to think about how they are doing their bit for hot weather preparedness this year.

Thank you and stay safe

Rob

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Great



Okay



Poor

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