

# Safety, health and environmental compliance committee report



I am pleased to report to you on the work of the safety, health and environmental compliance committee during 2024/25. The purpose of the committee is to satisfy itself of the overall adequacy and effectiveness, and to promote a culture of continuous improvement within the Network Rail group of companies, of the safety and health strategies; systems; policies; practices to deliver the business objectives; and compliance with environmental legal and regulatory requirements. Running a safe railway will always be our priority. We want everyone to feel safe whether they're working on, living near, or traveling on the railway.

## Mike Putnam

Chair, safety, health and environmental compliance committee

18 July 2025

The committee's activities include:

- receiving quarterly performance reports from Technical Authority about scorecard data, workforce and contractor safety and accidents, track accident risks, level crossings, health and wellbeing, public safety, contractor performance and reviews of progress of the weather risk task force.
- reviewing the group's strategies, systems, policies, and practices for safety, health and environmental compliance. It also ensures that the governance and management structures support these being implemented effectively;
- considering significant risks to individuals and the company's strategies for safety, health and environmental compliance and whether the executive is managing them effectively;
- reviewing internal audits, within its safety, health and environmental compliance remit, that are

carried out across the company and industry on the effectiveness of strategies, systems, policies, and practices. It makes sure that the audits have the correct scope, and it follows up to confirm that any recommendations have been properly addressed and implemented;

- making recommendations to the nominations and remuneration committee on the company's safety performance to inform decisions about performance related pay;
- considering regular duty holder reviews from the Regions and Route Services.

Today's railway is safer now than ever and train accidents or high-risk events are thankfully much more infrequent. In order to manage the risk of train accidents and reduce the chances to as low as reasonably practicable, we need to understand

the chances of an accident occurring by looking at factors that might cause an accident. These factors are known as “train accident precursors” and include the condition of the track, earthwork failures and rainfall, signalling wrong side failures, signals passed at danger and objects on the line. Such conditions and events do not necessarily cause harm in all cases, but they can lead to an accident. The precursor indicator model (“PIM”) monitors the underlying risk from train accidents, enables industry to monitor the impact of safety improvements and identify areas for further improvement. The statistics collected by the PIM are monitored by the committee at each meeting, providing us with a picture of how often things go wrong in the causal chain of an accident and with a statistically robust understanding of changes in train accident risk.

As well as passenger train risk, the committee also monitored reports on freight accident risk. This risk includes causal factors such as network infrastructure, the impact of weather, security and vandalism, fleet, loading, operations and freight connections. Additionally, risk management of freight accidents extends to the culture and behaviours required for everyone to get home and goods to destination, safely every day. In common with passenger train accident risk, freight accident risk is sourced from the industry safety management information system (SMIS) database which records incidents. All major freight operators are engaged with Network Rail and RSSB to create new tools to automatically draw safety data from internal reporting systems into a central RSSB repository that improves data completeness and accuracy and reduces the need for multiple inputs.

We reviewed work ongoing for managing and improving risks relating to signals passed at danger (“SPADs”) including the recent history of SPADs across the industry, the current level of maturity in the understanding and management of SPAD risk, variability across the rail industry and the potential improvements available using existing technology. Research shows that train driver reliability in approaching red signals is approaching the currently accepted limits of human performance. Practical actions undertaken for improvement were based around areas such as improving investigations, wider adoption of the RSSB SPAD toolkit, optimising current train protection and warning system. The plan is centred around helping

to deliver the objective of reducing risk so far as is reasonably practicable.

The committee received an update on the progress of implementing the recommendations from the Rail Accident Investigation Branch (RAIB) class investigation into factors influencing safety-critical human performance in signaling operations. Progress has been made against the six recommendations, including liaison with the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) and establishing mechanisms to monitor progress and ensure changes are embedded.

The weather risk task force reported to the committee on progress to manage the railway during adverse or extreme weather and monitored the recommendations from the Mair and Slingo reports. These included the development of a new weather academy to develop the capability of frontline operational and maintenance staff in managing the railway during severe weather events. More than 400 industry colleagues, including people from the train operating companies, have attended weather academy workshops and webinar sessions and we hope to continually improve the quality of the course materials by including the endorsement of the Chartered Institute of Rail Operators. Network Rail’s new technology produces high resolution rainfall forecasts which enable us to proactively target resources where there are extreme weather events and the PRIMA tool supports people making decisions about the appropriate speed for the prevailing weather conditions.

Our safety culture is a major component of our safety framework helping to keep passengers, the public and our workers safe. The committee reviewed the progress towards shaping and strengthening our safety culture including how culture is considered alongside ORR’s risk management maturity model and within Network Rail’s safety framework. We understand that continual transformation of culture is needed to keep us capable of meeting the challenges presented by an ever-changing environment. Culture change requires ongoing attention, reflection, and renewal and we recognised that the completion of one set of interventions does not guarantee lasting impact. Our culture change programme is continually refreshed so that it remains relevant, energised and capable of responding to changes such as the modernisation of maintenance, shadow GBR, changes in local

leadership, alteration of rosters, increased night working and the different and more efficient way we manage our funding. Safety is the number one priority and we learn from each other, making improvements and remain visible and engaged with the people at the forefront of our business. Senior leaders engage with people through safety workshops, safety standdowns, safety briefs, 'spend a shift,' reverse mentoring, 'walking in their shoes,' meeting the team at local depots and operational locations. They listen and take people's ideas on board, ensuring that our people lead for safety and are supported as they do so.

An improvement plan for our in-house occupational health service was introduced in July 2024. Since then, significant improvements have taken place including enhanced monitoring of health surveillance, reassignment of experienced doctors to safety critical cases, a new controlled process for clinicians to meet employees with existing medical conditions, better monitoring of employees with diabetes and the transfer of historical records onto the occupational health IT system.

Sustainability of the railway helps ensure the safety of passengers and our people, and we continue to look into new ways to improve the measurement and prediction of defects and faults on the railway. The committee receives regular reports to oversee performance and ensure timely and effective inspections of the network including visual inspections of overhead line equipment, inspections of track in tunnels and wire insulation degradation surveys. This remains important to the committee as it helps ensure the safety of passengers and our people. We continue to look into new ways to improve safety, enhance how we measure and predict defects and faults on the railway, and strengthen our planning for maintenance and renewals in CP7 and beyond.

To enhance safety across the rail network, the committee is managing a program to either close or upgrade level crossings. Prior to any closure, we engage in discussions with potentially affected local residents and conduct public consultations to assess the impact of such changes. Whenever feasible, we strive to provide a safe alternative for crossing the railway.

We monitor the incidence of trespass and suicides on the railway each year. Our route crime teams

work closely with their train operating companies and British Transport Police to respond to incidents involving trespass, crime and vulnerability. The cross-industry trespass and suicide prevention strategy group provides strategic oversight and supports collaboration.

We assessed our maturity against the ORR risk management maturity model, monitored the management of risks in relation to fire, freight and train accidents, reviewed our risk appetite for recommendation to the Board and reviewed the safety culture and framework of Network Rail. The director of risk and internal audit updated the committee at each meeting on any changes to the safety, health and environmental compliance audit plan, notable audits, overdue actions, themes, and key issues arising from internal audit's work. The committee reviewed audits on environment and sustainability reporting, silica respiratory health risks, workforce safety improvement plans, crime prevention and management as well as other audits with a substantial safety, health or environmental compliance component.

### **Committee attendees and reporting**

The executive directors of the company and group safety and engineering director normally attend meetings by invitation of the committee. Other members of the Board and senior executives of the group also attend as and when requested to report on specific areas that lie within the committee's areas of responsibility. The director of risk and internal audit attends committee meetings.

The general secretary of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (the RMT), or their representative, is invited to attend all meetings. This adds scrutiny and challenge to the committee's business and is consistent with our commitment to remain transparent to the wider rail industry and its important stakeholders.

Richard Hines, HM chief inspector of railways, is invited to attend committee meetings. The Chief Inspector attended all four meetings and presented his six-monthly reports on our safety performance to our meetings in May and November.

After each committee meeting, the chair reports to the Network Rail Board and answers any questions on the committee's work.

## Annual site visit

The committee periodically visits locations around the country to see first-hand the safety, health and environmental issues they discuss at meetings. In 2024, the committee visited the new measurement train and received presentations on safety and tools for setting proportionate speed restrictions in high rainfall. The members met in Crewe in the morning and travelled back to Euston on the train. In 2025, the committee will visit a medical assessment centre and meet the team from the national operations centre at the Quadrant in Milton Keynes.

## Performance related pay

Having reviewed the outturns of the safety measures and overall safety performance, the committee agreed to recommend to the nominations and remuneration committee that no further adjustments to the PRP outturn in respect of safety performance were necessary for 2024/25.

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## Planned activities for 2025/26

For the remainder of 2025, the committee's business will include oversight and monitoring of the following areas:

- fire safety risk
- structures management
- train and freight accident risk
- level crossing safety
- weather resilience and climate change.