Summary

ORR’s Annual Health and Safety Report of Performance on Britain’s Railways: 2015-16

July 2016

Background

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR), as health and safety regulator of all Britain’s railways, reports annually on how infrastructure managers, such as Network Rail and London Underground, and train operating companies, have managed health and safety.

The report combines the findings of ORR’s inspectors, who spend the majority of their time out on the railway network, with a detailed analysis of statistical trends and an assessment of the industry’s risk management capability.

2015 was the 175th year of HM Rail Inspectorate. In this anniversary year, we saw a major milestone: for the first time ever, there were no fatalities amongst those working on the railway.

Key messages

- There was good collaboration across the mainline industry in 2015-16, leading to the publication of a unified railway health and safety strategy, endorsed by ORR. This identified key issues requiring the industry’s attention, including the workforce’s occupational health.
- Safety at level crossings continues to improve, but standards are not yet applied consistently.
- ORR is scrutinising Network Rail’s programme of work to further improve safety management at level crossings to ensure harm at crossings continues to drop.
- Whilst for the first year ever there were no fatalities amongst those working on the railway, there was still loss of life and injury to station users, both passengers and the wider public. ORR is pressing the industry to increase its focus on safety for people using stations, particularly at the platform edge.
- ORR took a number of enforcement actions where safety standards were not being met in 2015-16. We served eleven improvement and six prohibition notices and successfully completed prosecution of four defendants.

Our priority

Although 2015-16 saw major steps towards our ‘zero industry-caused fatalities’ vision for safety on the railways, there is no room for complacency. We continue to expect further evidence of improvement across the industry, particularly improvements in occupational health.

The industry’s leadership need to ensure that safety initiatives are properly implemented to deliver real benefits on the ground. However, ORR’s inspectors still found that safety rules and procedures were not always followed consistently; ORR stepped in with enforcement action where safety fell below standard.

ORR inspects and assesses the health and safety of Britain’s railways – the health and safety of passengers, public and the workforce is ORR’s top priority.
RM3 explained

A key tool used by ORR to help the industry achieve excellence in health and safety risk management is the Risk Management Maturity Model (RM3). We use this model to assess and help manage organisations’ ability to control health and safety risks and identify areas for improvement. We see excellent management of health and safety risk as being built on three key areas:

- Leaders that inspire confidence and commitment.
- Making full use of employees’ potential and actively involving them in building a culture of trust, openness and empowerment.
- Using health and safety policy to challenge organisations to bring their business performance in line with their best-performing counterparts in the sector.

RM3 sets out criteria for policy, governance and leadership practice, on which ORR evaluates a company’s progress towards excellent safety management capability. ORR inspectors collect evidence, engage with key people across an organisation and observe safety management systems in action.

We analyse this evidence to determine weaknesses, highlight areas of good practice and to set a benchmark for year on year comparisons; many organisations across Britain’s railway sector also use RM3 for self-evaluation.

Looking forward, we are continuing to develop RM3’s scope to measure organisational capabilities in areas other than safety, such as asset management and our own regulatory functions.