User Worked Railway Level Crossings

Devising a safe system of work for crossing the railway

This guidance is for businesses whose employees may need to cross the railway.

It is a list of issues to consider when drawing up a safe system of work for employees who cross the railway. It is focused on a type of crossing called a user worked crossing. These crossings require people to operate the crossing themselves.

Issues to consider include:

1. **Does your business need to use the crossing?**  
   Is there an alternative route?  
   Is there any scope for closure, if your business is the “authorised user” for the crossing?

2. **Can you eliminate the risk from crossing in any other way?**  
   Can you take animals across in a vehicle rather than on foot?  
   Can you change the land use to avoid or minimise the need to cross?

3. **Understanding the crossing controls**  
   What does the railway provide at the crossing for those using it?

4. **Understanding the instructions at the crossing**  
   Have you applied them to your circumstances?  
   Have you tested your workers’ understanding of them?

5. **Additional hazards**  
   Such as sloping ground, overhead lines, skewed crossing, which may affect workers’ safety whilst crossing

6. **Planning for foreseeable abnormal situations**  
   Are you crossing with an unusual vehicle (e.g. tracked)?  
   Is reversing necessary?  
   Is there snow and ice?

7. **What to do if there is a problem with the crossing controls**  
   Can you and your workers recognise when there is a problem and take appropriate action?

8. **Out of hours arrangements**  
   Do you know what the alternative contact number is?  
   Have your workers got it to hand?

9. **What to do in an emergency**  
   Do you and your workers know how and when to contact the signaller?
Other issues to consider in drawing up a safe system of work include:

- Pre plan your operations and discuss them with Network Rail
  - Is there a window to work in – such as planned possessions when the railway is not in use?
  - Can Network Rail provide a railway crossing attendant for the duration of your operations?
  - Could you employ your own banksman / gateman / phone operator to make your operation safer across the level crossing?
- Consider locking the gates if it is only your workers who are using the crossing.

**Briefing workers who cross the railway**

**Briefing for workers on general use: They need an**

- Understanding of the crossing instructions
- Understanding of the method of work

**Briefing for workers on specific crossings: They need to know**

- When to use the phone (and/or alternatives)
- If there is a lack of pedestrian facilities – how to cross safely

**Briefing for workers on foreseeable abnormal situations: They need to know what to do about**

- Adverse Weather – fog, darkness
- Abnormal situations / loads / vehicles / reversing
- Damaged, missing or malfunctioning controls at the crossing
- Out of hours arrangements
- Emergencies

Report damaged or defective crossings to Network Rail **08457 11 41 41**

Report misuse to:
British Transport Police on **0800 40 50 40** or Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111**