



OFFICE OF RAIL AND ROAD

ORR's health and safety policy position on-train¹ crowding

IMPORTANT NOTE: This position statement is currently under review and will be updated during 2019. More details can be found [here](#).

Introduction

The number of passengers boarding a train can exceed the seats available. This can be caused by the “turn-up and go” nature of Britain’s domestic railways, the increasing popularity of rail travel and increased advanced ticket bookings leaving fewer seats for other travellers.

We recognise that crowding can be uncomfortable and sometimes might make passengers feel unsafe, but we doubt that many passengers would accept restrictions on their ability to board a train of their choice.

Britain’s railways have a good and improving safety record and train accidents are increasingly rare, but it is inevitable that on a heavily loaded a train, there are more passengers at risk of an injury in the event of a train accident. This does not necessarily mean that an individual passenger is at greater risk.

As the health and safety authority for Britain’s railways, we have responsibility for ensuring railway companies protect passengers from any health and safety risks caused by crowded trains, so far as is reasonably practicable – see:

<http://orr.gov.uk/what-and-how-we-regulate/health-and-safety/guidance-and-research/risk-management>.

Our aims

- To take passengers’ health and safety concerns about crowded trains seriously and respond appropriately in line with our risk based priorities and enforcement policy statement – see <http://orr.gov.uk/what-and-how-we-regulate/health-and-safety/guidance-and-research/risk-management>

¹ This statement does not cover crowding at stations.

- to ensure train operators fulfill their health and safety responsibility to protect passengers' health and safety, so far as is reasonably practicable; and to use our influence, where we can, to help make sure that processes to identify, reduce and alleviate crowding are operated efficiently and effectively.

Our position

- trains are designed, to operate safely, even when many passengers are standing, for example, by the provision of handholds; and
- there is no conclusive evidence linking overcrowding with anything other than low level health and safety risks to individual passengers². We recognise that there may be a small increase in slip and trip risks to passengers as a result of obstructions in aisles on crowded trains.

We expect train operators

- to comply with their health and safety responsibilities and protect passengers from risk on crowded trains, so far as is reasonably practicable;
- to apply recognised good practice to manage on-train crowding, such as the Rail Safety and Standards Board's "*Crowd management on trains: a good practice guide*" provides useful guidance³. This includes a customer-focused approach which listens to feedback from its front-line staff; provides timely information to passengers; reminds passengers to store their luggage safely; and has contingency plans to reduce risks from service disruption;
- to ensure their staff are trained and competent to manage the risks from:
 - emergency evacuation;
 - crowding on platforms and station⁴, which can make train crowding worse;
 - luggage and bicycles etc blocking aisles and exits; and
 - travelling on underground routes in hot weather, and in particular when trains breakdown or service is disrupted.

² RSSB's 2005 '*the health and safety effects of crowding*' research said that for higher speeds, being seated or standing makes little difference to the overall severity of injury following a train accident" (standing passengers may sustain different injuries to seated passengers). But at lower speeds, seated passengers may be less likely to sustain serious injuries than standing passengers. See: <http://www.rssb.co.uk/research-development-and-innovation/research-and-development/research-project-catalogue/t307>

³ See: <http://www.rssb.co.uk/research-development-and-innovation/research-and-development/research-reports-catalogue/pb009693>

⁴ This policy position only covers on-train crowding

How passengers can help

We recognise passengers can play an important role in helping to reduce the risks from crowding, for example by:

- avoiding blocking entrances and exits;
- stowing luggage safely, particularly on crowded trains;
- carrying a bottle of drinking water during hot weather; and
- using information about busy train services provided by train operators to help plan journeys.

ORR's role in economic regulation

Beyond our safety duties and responsibilities, ORR is the economic regulator of Britain's main line railways, with a developing consumer focus. Our vision is satisfaction levels of passengers and freight users equivalent to the best in railways and other forms of transport. Passenger satisfaction statistics published by Passenger Focus⁵ show levels of satisfaction with sufficient room to sit or stand around the two thirds mark, meaning that one third of passengers are not satisfied. It is likely that train operators will need to develop further strategies to address this issue, if overall passenger satisfaction levels are to continue to increase, as the country comes out of recession and levels of economic growth increase.

⁵ See: <http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research-publications/research/national-passenger-survey-introduction/>.