

HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION (HSC)
RAIL INDUSTRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (RIAC)

SUMMARY OF RIAC PUBLIC MEETING
2 NOVEMBER 2005, ROSE COURT, LONDON

Introduction

James King welcomed the audience and set out the agenda for the meeting. He explained that there would be two presentations, on Crowding and Community Safety on the mainline and underground railways. The audience would have the opportunity to ask questions after each presentation.

What is RIAC?

Margaret Burns explained that RIAC's role was to advise the Health & Safety Commission (HSC) on health and safety issues within the rail industry. RIAC consists of industry bodies and train companies, as well as representatives from the general public. She told the meeting that HSE Rail would merge with the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR), in April 2006.

Crowding on the mainline and underground railways; the work done so far and the emerging work streams.

Michael Woods explained that the Rail Safety & Standards Board (RSSB) is conducting several work streams related to the health and safety effects of crowding. The initial research was a hazard identification study. The aim of the research was to understand the health and safety issues that may arise as a result of crowding on the main line, the underground railways and also at stations.

The main findings of the research were that it was difficult to find a direct correlation between crowding, overcrowding, large numbers of people in one place and the nature and the severity of accidents and incidents. This is because there is no commonly accepted definition of crowding or overcrowding. It was found that crowding is a function of a very busy society with lots of people living, working and traveling in close proximity all wanting to get to the same places at the same time. Crowding was also regarded as an issue that people create themselves through choice, and the issue of how people decide to go where in a train and when to move is a key factor. RSSB's research ranked hazards, studied hazardous events, carried out accident reviews, and ran a number of industry and stakeholder workshops. The research recommended that further work be carried out on risk control; data recording; and the management of crowds and management of the on-train situation.

The study on managing large events and perturbations at stations covered spatial issues and peoples' views on available space and the number of people around them. The study also found that events would go wrong when the local organisers are not used to working with the railways or other transport providers and if the local rail staff have never managed a crowd before. Contingency plans should be practiced, to ascertain their relevance to varying situations and the location where the event is taking place.

RSSB considered that future research plans which will include work on:

- Incident recording of crowding related events
- Defining crowding within the industry
- Defining triggers for the recognition of on-train crowding.
- The impact of crowding controls – are they working?
- The effectiveness of 'normal' risk control measures – warning signs may not be easily recognisable.
- Contingency planning good practice guidance on dealing with organised and unusual events, and crowding in general.
- Passenger comfort issues - space, temperature and humidity.
- Under-utilisation of the space available on trains – do seating and standing arrangements on trains facilitate crowding.
- Public behaviour issues

Questions from the audience

Q. I do get concerned when the industry makes the point of we'll do more and more studies on more and more bits of safety without any check on the fact the Treasury's paying out eighty seven million pounds a week of Tax payer's money to run this industry. I hope the research that is to be carried out is not shelved once it has been completed and therefore be a waste of taxpayers' money. We need to produce research that highlights the main issues and there are evidenced changes as a result.

A. Since 1997 the industry has coped with 40% growth and many of the issues we are grappling with today are issues of growth. Some people have got to look at the whole issue of the capacity and nature of the network and other people have to do research into safety, to see if there are any lessons we can learn and ways of managing the situation.

Q. What can you do to protect the majority of passengers and also vulnerable children from smoke inhalation caused by a few selfish passengers who have no regard for the health and safety of others? At Stratford and West Ham they have a policy in place where's there is no smoking on the platforms and I would like to have this implemented at London Victoria, London Bridge and East Croydon.

A. The railways have to reflect society at large in their reaction to issues like smoking. Smoking should not happen on trains any more and maybe in the

future platforms will also come under the same regime. The Industry should also be trying to stop crews smoking in places where smoke leaches into trains.

The more people complain, the more likely these bans are to come into place. If complainants are dissatisfied with the response they get from a Train Operating Company (TOC) or Network Rail, they have every right and indeed duty to forward their complaints to the Rail Passengers Council (RPC) so that we can take up these issues on your behalf.

Community safety on the mainline and underground railways; the statistics, industry's response and the concept of partnership between the rail industry and the communities that surround it to minimise the occurrences of trespass and vandalism

Trespass and vandalism is now a major issue for the rail industry. Several parties within the industry such as the TOCs, trade unions, RSSB and HSE are involved in crime working groups and initiatives. The National Railway Crime Group (NRCG) has wide membership and provides strategic direction.

In terms of the industry there are a wide range of criminal incidents that can affect the safe running and performance of the railway network and clearly impact on the safety of members of the public, the workforce and passengers.

The main issues are:

- Trespass
- Vandalism, such as obstructions on the line, graffiti and equipment damage.
- Violence at work, such as assaults, threats and abuse.
- Crimes against the person such as robbery, sexual offences and assaults.
- Other offences such as fare evasion, ticket fraud, theft, arson and terrorism.

There are three key areas; route crime, station crime and on-train crime. The following data provides an insight in to the effects of trespass and vandalism on the rail industry, staff and the general public.

- 46% of the residual risk of a catastrophic train accident relates to public behaviour.
- Crime against the railway costs the railway businesses £260 million a year. Amounting to three or four weeks of the total cost to the public of running the railway system.
- Crime can be attributed to 500,000 minutes of delay a year.
- A crime is committed every 90 seconds in peak periods.
- In terms of human costs, there are fatalities, injuries and staff trauma.
- 200 plus suicides occur on the national network and even more when you include the London Underground.
- An estimated 27 million offences of trespass are committed annually.
- Ten million offences relate to 10 to 16 year olds.

- 1 in 3 children admit to trespassing and/or vandalising the railway.

The NRCG was established to enable a cross-industry approach to the problem of trespass and vandalism. It consists of railway experts who form a stakeholder group for research and development and have an input into the development of the industries Strategic Safety Plan.

Aidan Nelson highlighted the current education initiatives and the move to a curriculum led approach. The teaching zone allows for resources to be delivered into schools in the most proactive and efficient way. Other initiatives such as artworks promote safety messages and activities about the railways within the local community. "Tyler 4 ever" is a film made by the friends of Tyler Deacon who was killed in Leicester on 3 December 2003. The film was made to warn children about the dangers of wandering or playing on the tracks. It has been successful in communicating with the community within Leicester as a whole. More information on the education programme can be found at www.trackoff.org.

Aidan Nelson then went on to talk about engineering and enforcement and the role for the British Transport Police (BTP). There have been engineering initiatives to remove lineside scrap, install bridge caging and CCTV as a way to minimise risks. With enforcement there is a need to deter, detect, convict and appropriately punish, making the punishment fit the crime. The industry is doing a lot of work to raise the understanding of potential consequences and the costs of inappropriate behaviour, and the need to reinforce the judiciary as having a part to play in addressing the issue.

The key headlines on trespass and vandalism are:

- Trespass has steadily decreased from 2000-2004. The lowest number of trespass fatalities on record for the national network was in 2005 (as of July), when there were only 5 fatalities.
- The number of near misses in 2000-2004 fell by 21%.
- There have been six children killed on the national network this year.
- Drink is a key factor in fatalities.
- Vandalism has been steadily decreasing by 33% since 2000.
- Trains running into obstructions and reportable collisions are both down.
- There were 3800 reported acts of violence at work in 2004. Fare evasion assaults account for 30% of the total.
- Crimes against the person (based on British Transport Police data) have seen an increase of 7% in 2003-2004. The number of robberies has been constant for three years. Firearms offences are down. Sexual offences, which amounts to 10% of all violent crime has increased for the second year running.

Aidan Nelson concluded his presentation by saying that Network Rail had incorporated rail passenger security and rail fatalities management into their safety planning model. However, the way forward is for the railway community and the general public to act in partnership.

Questions from the audience

Q. I am concerned about the safety of class 142 units that are used on urban routes running into Manchester and Leeds particularly where they are heavily overcrowded. In late afternoon they are filled with two or three hundred people running at speed through Salford and Bolton. These units were designed for rural services in the days of Mrs Thatcher and I am concerned that in an accident, there could be a large number of fatalities. Could you tell me whether you will be doing research into dealing with this structural issue?

A. In terms of the long-term suitability of the class 142s, Winsford (when a passenger train ran into two 142 units which were travelling empty at the time) does illustrate a good point. You have to take into account that crashworthiness standards have moved on from the 35 years since the trains were first conceived. However, the risk of collision, train on train and the risk of derailment are much reduced as a result of the train protection and warning system. I do agree that we need to think about what comes next but it is about what is affordable for the routes on which they are going to operate, and using fit for purpose rolling stock on railways.

Q. When I see a heavily painted graffitied train arriving at Catford Bridge in the morning it suggests to me that it hasn't been securely stabled overnight and even if it has been, there hasn't been adequate surveillance. In the advent of what happened in July this year in London and the Madrid train bombing, I am quite concerned. It makes me feel unsafe.

A. It is difficult to totally separate a depot from their surrounding environment, even with the appropriate fencing. Whilst you can take some steps to protect, it is never possible to deter people completely. There has been a lot of good work in a number of depots and the implementation of CCTV is an effective tool. There are other guidelines that are followed to ensure that before trains enter service, they are properly inspected and at the end of their journeys they are also inspected, so there are ways to ensure that the security of passengers and staff is maintained. Some train operators have a policy of never putting into service a unit that is heavily contaminated. This is a good counter measure because people do this to promote their "art" work.

The industry is committed to dealing with the aftermath of graffiti attacks. Network Rail's policy has been to prioritise graffiti removal from operational signage and signals that could affect the safety and the safe running of the railway but as a matter of policy they are now investing money in removing graffiti when it appears on buildings and line sides on the basis that if you can continue to do this on a repetitive basis it provides a deterrent for people.

London Underground (LUL) has removed painted graffiti from all their trains, stations and their trackside environment. LUL are also working on how to prevent glass scratched graffiti that is very difficult to prevent. Graffiti removal

is a target for the BTP and they have had some considerable successes against organised gangs.

Mark Leyland

Comment: I would like to thank London Underground for doing superb work on cleaning graffiti along the Brompton Wall Cemetery at West Brompton and also for Network Rail and Silverlink who have between them, worked hard to keep the station clean. What we have noticed is that graffiti that has appeared at West Brompton has been small and when it has been eradicated, it has not come back. The trick is keeping it clean and getting it clean very quickly.

Q. There is an issue about the legal requirement with regards to access to railway property. There are a great many damaged fences that are not repaired. We also seem to have a situation where those who are now responsible for permitting operators to procure stock seem to be unconcerned about overcrowding. It is acceptable to run a four car Desiro out of Waterloo crammed to the door but it is not acceptable to run a lightly loaded eight car formation because its got slam doors and it's a mark I unit. I think I would be rather sitting down in a mark I than standing up in a newer train.

A. Fence repairs are a priority for Network Rail and Network Rail is measured by their ability to repair fences.

In terms of rolling stock and safety risks, mark I trains are less crash worthy as compared to newer trains. In Rail News it was reported that this is the first time ever in recorded history that more than 50% of the passenger rolling stock fleet in Great Britain, has been under ten years old. There are a lot of new trains coming into service and the older trains are gradually reduced.

P Glazer

Comment: The design of some rolling stock does not take into account safety. The Central line has sideways seats. In the event of a train stopping quickly, a lot of people do not have sufficient control to be able to grab onto something to stop them coming off the seat, which I think is a great hazard. Where operators have got certain trains that are very busy, there does not seem to be any incentive for them to deal with the overcrowding problem by having sufficient rolling stock.

Q. The crowding issue is more important as modern rolling stock have less seats, narrower seats, and slimmer padding. More people are standing for their journey and I think there is a correlation between that and the increase in back injuries.

A. Some of the newer trains have a much harder, firmer seat which ergonomic experts believe are better for people with back trouble. There is definitely a trend to have short distance trains with more comfortable standing places rather than have lots of seats and that is a balancing issue rolling stock designers have to take into account.

N Dibben

Comment: People feel overcrowding is dangerous, because of their lack of options in regards to a means of escape. I think everybody who travels by train will know that if you are travelling on an empty train, when it gets to the terminus you can get off far quicker than if the train is crowded.

Q. Over the past couple of months, Network Rail has cleaned the embankment approaching Clapham Junction yet this morning when I came up to London, it is graffitied. I feel strongly that if there are people out to graffiti the railways, they are going to graffiti it whether there is fencing there or not and in many ways when graffiti is cleaned, it is certainly not a deterrent.

I also wanted to ask the Panel's views in light of the reorganisation of the country's Police forces and the question mark over the BTP, whether any of the organisations here would be making a representation to the Home Office that the BTP should be maintained in its organisation or absorbed into the county or regional constabularies?

A. The Home Office Review of English and Welsh forces does not cover the BTP. The organisation is subject to a review by the Department for Transport, which may tie in with the Home Office, either with a view to perhaps amalgamating the BTP into local forces.

J Cartledge

Comment: I represent the RPC on RIAC. All of the organisations represented here are responding to that initiative because they fund the BTP and have their own views on how the railway should be policed and what the best structure would be. RPC will respond to that exercise on behalf of passenger users of the railway and if it is an issue which members of the travelling public at large have particular views on, then now is the moment to be sending those to us, because it is important that we are exposed to any concerns that are out there.

D Redgewell

Comment: The British Transport Police is a Police Force we need as a society. We need them as part of a broader society to protect our public transport system. I do not believe it should be down purely to money recycled via the train operating companies. They are a dedicated police

force with expertise when it comes to everything from terrorism to public transport.

Q. The main part of the Brighton Main line Route Utilisation Strategy document deals with the potential merger of the Gatwick Express into the Southern commuter service. The second part of the document could cause an immense amount of overcrowding at Platform 17, Clapham Junction. Can HSE do some investigation to inform the recommendations within the strategy?

A. A full risk assessment and safety case has to be authorised before the strategy can be implemented. In this case the Department of Transport, will assess the Route Utilisation Strategy.

Rail stakeholders are very interested in the dangers of interchange activity at places where there is not enough room for people to interchange safely.

M Burns

Comment: As a member of the Health and Safety Commission, we are interested in looking at the totality of risks, and not just one area of the operation of the railway.

Q. Could RIAC comment on section 37(b) of National Conditions of Carriage and the rail companies attitude to this term of the contract between the rail companies and the train traveller i.e. denying passengers access to empty seats without payment.

A. This is covered within the Manuals of Conditions of Carriage.

Q. Most major stations and virtually all LU stations in the Southeast have access to the platform by ticket barrier operation. I admit these are necessary for preventing ticket fraud/fare evasion but I have reservations about their use during station evacuations. The error seems to be that customers even in a hurry to leave automatically put their ticket in the gate barrier out of routineness (even if it is open already) this slows down the process of exiting quickly. I would like to suggest that when the emergency button to keep the gates open is pressed an audible announcement to continue walking and don't use tickets is given.

A. If the arrangements are not understood when dealing with an evacuation situation, the risk has not been properly addressed. However you do have to touch your Oyster card otherwise you end up paying too much. When a barrier line is in operation there has to be a member of staff somewhere nearby. There may be a training issue for staff who are in and around barrier

lines. If there is a genuine emergency they should instruct people to hurry through and do not bother about your tickets.

It is recognised that people feel less safe if they think risks are not being managed so the industry has to take this into account when making plans for emergency evacuation by providing good briefing arrangements for the general public.

D Chalkley

Comment: I think the industry is very good at managing risks in circumstances where large numbers of crowds are expected. There are many central London stations where there are obviously routine methods of controlling crowds. Where I think the management of risk is not so obvious is when an unusual event happens.

Q. If I were on a train with people committing a crime if there was a telephone number displayed that I could phone, I would report it. Every bridge in this country has got a plate on it with a telephone number to phone if a car hits it. Why can't trains and stations? After 8pm, trains and stations have no staff and we do not know where to report crime or vandalism. What we need is the number displayed in the stations and on the underground.

A. The facilitator informed the attendees that they could call BTP on 0800 40 50 40 to report incidents.

It was agreed that the number needed to be published more widely, but there was a concern that it could be used irresponsibly. One of the key issues for the BTP is identifying where someone is when they are making the call, and with the introduction of mobile phones, this is more difficult.

Q. Is it not time that you banned the drinking alcohol on all forms of London transport, underground as well as overground?

A. Drinking is a big issue in terms of assault, both verbal and otherwise. At the same time Government are saying use public transport when you've been out enjoying yourself. It is a complicated issue.

Q. We are concerned about overcrowding every day from Waterloo to Leatherhead. Particularly at Wimbledon, Earlsfield and Clapham Junction. In the event of terrorist attack casualties will be high. Can the infection from Avian flu or another virus be easily spread in overcrowded conditions?

A. This issue is outside the remit of the Health and Safety Commission. This is all a product of living in a busy society. Terrorist attacks and the spreading

of infection could apply to a busy shopping centre, a school, a place of worship, a cinema and a concert.

Conclusion

Margaret Burns closed the meeting by highlighting the main points covered. She said the meeting had been informative and allowed RIAC to gauge how the general public perceive crowding, trespass and vandalism. It had also allowed the rail industry to publicise current research strands and key trends within the sector.