

## Safe use of manually propelled rail handlers (iron men) - Issue 2

**Issued to:** All Network Rail line managers, safety professionals and RISQS registered contractors

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**Location:** National

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### Overview

This Safety Advice is being re-issued following a review by the STE Head of Plant team to confirm the on-going actions that are required for the safe operation of this equipment.

On 1 November 2014 a group of track workers were moving 2 x 52ft pieces of rail for approximately a mile and a quarter on the line between Pantyffynnon Jcn and Gwaun-cae-Gurwen (GCG) in Wales using two pairs of manually propelled rail handlers (MPRH).

The MPRHs were being operated down a gradient which was up to 1 in 40, with the load for each pair being just short of 1 tonne. The rail head was contaminated with leaves and it was raining heavily at the time.

Both pairs of MPRH experienced difficulties during braking; this resulted in them gaining speed to the point the operators could no longer control them. One of the operators of the first pair received a graze injury and another suffered from shock.

The first pair ran away for approximately 5 miles crossing several level crossings including narrowly avoiding a team working on the first. The second pair was brought to a halt at the first level crossing. Subsequent inspection of the brakes shown them to be worn.

This advice was previously issued as [NRS 343](#).

### Immediate action required

#### Ongoing Actions

Manually propelled rail handlers shall not be used on gradients greater than 1 in 150 (1:150) until further notice from the Head of Plant.

ALL operations involving manually propelled rail handlers, irrespective of any gradient restrictions, shall:

- Be planned in accordance with the requirements of NR/L2/RMVP/0200.
- Consider and apply the relevant requirements of NR/L2/OHS/019.
- Only use 'in service' and fit for purpose units.
- Be operated in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

- Be operated in conjunction with a detailed work plan and risk assessment.
- Be operated by the correct number of competent staff as detailed in the manufacturer's instructions.
- Have brake tests performed by competent staff at the start of shift and once mounted on rail.

Note: Network Rail shall undertake self assurance for manually propelled rail handler activities in line with NR/L3/MTC/MG0221.

Copies of Safety Advice are available on [Safety Central](#).