

## Derailment and collision at Watford Tunnel

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

**Ref:** NRB 16/16

**Date of issue:** 30/09/2016

**Location:** Watford Tunnel

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## Overview

On 19 September 2016 a train struck a landslip at the entrance to Watford Tunnel. Coming to a stop in the tunnel the derailed train was then struck by a train travelling in the opposite direction before emergency protection could be put in place.

There were two passenger injuries reported from the people on the trains involved.

60mm of rain fell between 3am and 7am that morning which is equivalent to a months' worth of rainfall for September in the Watford area.

There had been a failure of the cutting caused by overtopping of the crest by surface water. Weathered chalk washed out from the face of the slope into the up cess and line adjacent to the northern portal of Watford Tunnel.

Vegetation had been removed from the cutting surface as part of work to mitigate the threat of rock-fall with rock netting.

A historical failure and repair in the 1940s at the site consisted of rock facing and drainage works.

## Discussion Points

Whilst we are investigating the causes of this incident please discuss the following with your teams:

- Do you understand the requirements for your role in Route adverse/extreme weather plans?
- Are the operational procedures for managing the risks posed by adverse/extreme weather events clearly understood and consistently applied?
- Is the presence and condition of crest drainage on the approach to tunnel portals understood?
- How are drainage assets identified in pre-construction information packs (PCIPs) for any project works you are involved with?
- Do pre-construction walk-outs identify unknown assets and check with those responsible what level of protection / access / maintenance would be required during construction activities?
- Are similar cutting slopes being worked on by contractors at the moment?
- Are Asset Protection teams proactively managing land use changes around high risk locations of our network (for example tunnel portal cuttings)?

Note – relevant company standards are: NR/L3/TRK/1010, NR/L2/CIV/086 and NR/L2/OCS/021.

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