

Engineering work site given up whilst track remained obstructed

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

Ref: NRB 17/09

Date of issue: 19/05/2017

Location: Kirkham South Junction, LNW Route

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Overview

At 05:25 on 15 May 2017 a tamper, travelling at 15 mph transiting to exit the possession safely stopped short of a 5 metre long pile which was obstructing the Down Main line.

The transit was not part of arrangements for verifying the line as clear. Other than the chance presence of the tamper, there were no further controls in place to prevent the first passenger service, at line speed encountering the pile.

Contractors installing piles had recently given up an engineering work site covering the area, declaring it safe for the passage of trains.

The pile, had been loaded into the Movax piling head and taken to the planned work location. On arrival the work group identified a pile "stored ready" on the lineside and set the pile they had been carrying down in the four foot of the opposite line a short distance from the place of work, and then proceeded to install the stored pile.

Due to installation complications the team realised that they would not be able to drive the pile to its complete depth in the time available before the work site was shortened back to allow the tamper to exit the possession.

So the work group installed the pile to a safe depth and travelled back to the access point approximately 20 minutes away. No-one on-site remembered to collect the pile which had been set down in the four foot.

An investigation is underway; however the following contributory factors have been established:

- The previous night's shift had been cancelled.
- The originally planned possession time had been shortened from 6 hours to 3 hours 20 minutes, to allow tamper access.
- Before setting down the pile at the final location the work group had taken it to two other locations where site conditions and missing supporting documentation had prevented installation.
- The engineering work site was approximately 17 miles long and one RRV associated with these works had travelled two hours within the work site to reach the first pile location.

Discussion Points

While we are investigating the incident please discuss the following with your team.

- How do we plan our work to make sure those delivering it for us have the time and resources to do so safely?
- How can a work group make sure that items temporarily stored on the track are removed to a safe location before they leave the place of work?
- What impact could applying the principles of Safe Work Leader / Person in Charge have on incidents like this?
- How long should an Engineering work site realistically be and what would make it too long or too short?

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