

## Near miss with staff involving Lookout Operated Warning System (LOWS)

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

**Ref:** NRB 17/23

**Date of issue:** 02/11/2017

**Location:** Ecclefechan, Dumfries & Galloway

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### Overview

On the morning of 29 September 2017 red zone working, by use of Lookout Operated Warning System (LOWS), was in place by to allow survey work for the High Output team to take place.

The work commenced at 0730 that morning and at 0830 advanced LOWS operators were positioned on the Up and Down lines. A site lookout was also in place for the group as per the planned safe system of work.

At 1010 the site lookout became aware of the approach of a train on the Up line due to hearing and feeling the vibration of a freight train on the rails.

The group had not been warned or alerted of this train by the LOWS system.

They were warned by the site lookout and moved clear and into a position of safety. One member of staff was walking on the Up line when the train approached and reached a position of safety 5 seconds before the train passed.

Immediately after the incident the COSS called the LOWS operator who had failed to warn of the oncoming train. The operator highlighted he had not seen this train passing his location, although they had not missed any prior to this event.

### Discussion Points

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

- How can we manage the risk of fatigue in LOWS operators?
- What can you do to better protect the safe system of work from fatigue and concentration issues of staff carrying out LOWS duties?
- How do you provide increased sighting distance due to foliage obstruction?
- How do you take account of any changing conditions, for example new vegetation growth?

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