

Plant and equipment stored in tunnels

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

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Location: Balcombe tunnel, SE Route and Stowe Hill tunnel, LNW Route

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Overview

On Thursday 1 December temporary lighting that was left lineside in Balcombe tunnel after track renewals four weeks earlier was caught by a train, damaging a track circuit cable and causing significant performance impact. The lighting was moved by vibration or turbulence from passing trains. Investigation found the equipment left in the tunnel included a full petrol can.

On Thursday 8 December one of four portable permanent way trolleys that were temporarily stacked in Stowe Hill tunnel after work the previous night was moved by vibration or turbulence and one was struck by a train. The train had a broken window and bodyside damage.

In each case, the contractors involved had not properly secured the equipment left in the tunnel and had not adequately considered and mitigated the risk of damage, fire or derailment.

In 2007 a London Underground train was derailed at Mile End after passing trains moved materials temporarily stored in a tunnel cross-passage.

The Infrastructure Plant Manual (NR/PLANT/0200/module P505) requires that all small items of plant or accessories are left securely after work.

Discussion Points

While the investigations are underway please discuss the following with your team:

- What risks are created by leaving equipment in tunnels?
- Would you recognise the additional risks in tunnels from wind effects?
- How should work teams plan plant and equipment storage after a worksite in a tunnel?
- What items would you regard as unacceptable to leave unsecured in a tunnel after a worksite is handed back?
- What controls and checks should be used to ensure worksites are left tidy and safe?

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