

RSSB – ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT 2018-19

Introduction

In this Reps' Bulletin the Railway Safety and Standards Board (RSSB)'s *Annual Health & Safety Report: A reference guide to trends on GB railways 2018-2019* (AHSR) will be considered with the intention of highlighting workforce issues.

The AHSR replaces RSSB's Annual Safety Performance Reports (ASPR). Reps may wish to read this Bulletin alongside the ASPRs reported on in previous years and which are available on TSSA's websiteⁱ⁾:

ASPR 2017-18 (H&S/125/Aug 2018)

ASPR 2016-17 (H&S/123/Sep 2017)

ASPR 2015-16 (H&S/117/Jul 2016)

ASPR 2014-15 (H&S/111/Aug 2015)

ASPR 2013-14 (H&S/109/June 2015)

The AHSR 2018-19 and associated publications includes a range of details, including:

- comparisons with the safety performance of European railways which showed that Britain's railways are, again, the safest amongst the tenⁱⁱ largest

EU railways, but fourth safest out of all the 25 nations;ⁱⁱⁱ

- intermodal comparisons showing that mainline rail travel is safer than all other forms of land transport.^{iv}

SPAD Risk

Despite this impressive performance, the AHSR makes a significant point that **safety is a not a stable state**. One accident can destroy a reputation – and more importantly, many lives – as happened in Spain with the high-speed derailment at Santiago de Compostela in July 2013. This is why monitoring Signals Passed at Danger (SPADs) is so important.

SPAD incidents (increased from 293 in 2017-18 to 307 in 2018-19):

- 56 SPADs related to freight, the lowest in five years;
- 252 caused by "passenger or other trains," the highest in five years^v

In addition to frequency, SPAD risk tracks the chances of escalation to an accident, and the potential consequences of SPADs. In January and February 2019, SPAD risk rose from 50% to 68% ^{vi} (of the September

2006 baseline) because of three high risk SPADs¹.

Significant anniversaries

The AHSR is an important document that this year begins by noting that it is published between two very significant anniversaries.

The first was Ladbroke Grove on 5th October 1999 when a train from Paddington struck an HST headed towards the terminus station, killing 31 people and injuring hundreds of others. The AHSR notes that Ladbroke Grove was “an accident which exposed the failings of our industry at high human cost. It was a SPAD, but it was more than a SPAD: it was a SPAD that threw up failings in driver training, in change management, learning from previous incidents, and failings in the sharing of knowledge and understanding.”^{vii}

The other anniversary marked by the AHSR was the Clapham disaster which occurred on 12th December 1988 and was due to a wrongside failure caused by an incorrectly wired signal that displayed a green light, allowing one train to pass before colliding with two others, leaving 35 people dead and nearly 500 injured. RSSB conclude that whilst BR’s attention was correctly focused on SPADs at the time (as the fatal accidents at Purley (4th March 1989) and Bellgrove (6th March 1989) subsequently showed), the lesson learnt is not to forget about other hazards, such as wrongside failures.

¹ A High Risk SPAD is where the conflict point was reached or passed.

The scope of AHSR

Using SMIS,^{viii} the AHSR is intended to “provide a comprehensive overview of safety performance...The scope is predominantly focused on incidents connected with the operation and maintenance of the mainline railway in Great Britain, but is extended to include fatalities and injuries to the workforce occurring in road traffic accidents while driving on duty, and fatalities and injuries in yards, depots and sidings.”^{ix}

Like the ASPR reports before, AHSR covers a financial year, this time that ending in March 2019. It does not state who its intended audience should be but in previous years this has been described as those in the industry who manage risk as well as railway employees, trade unions, safety reps, passengers, government ministers and others.

For union reps working in the industry, the document spells out a series of issues that should require their attention for potential further action. A further Reps Bulletin will address health and wellbeing issues which feature in the AHSR (and in other ORR and RSSB publications).

Where can I find the Report?

The AHSR is available on the RSSB’s website. There are two reports:^x

- Full Report
- Key Charts Report

The reports are also available along with a video of a webinar which seeks to highlight key facts and answer some questions.

Headline Statistics in the AHSR

The Full Report gives some headline statistics that includes:

- 0 passenger or workforce fatalities in train derailments for the twelfth consecutive year;
- In total, there were 40 (49 in 2017-18, 39 in 2016-17) accidental fatalities, 548 major injuries (526 in 2017-18), 11,369 minor injuries (11,850 in 2017-18) and 951 cases of shock/trauma (925 in 2017-18);
- Of the 40 fatalities:
 - two workforce fatalities. The first, in June 2018 at Bearsden, saw a young contractor fall from height. The second, at Stoats Nest Junction occurred when a Network Rail contractor was struck by a train in November 2018 (RAIB are investigating the incident);
 - 13 passengers were killed on trains or in stations (seven are classed as “platform edge incidents”^{xi} and three as “assault or abuse”);
 - 25 were members of the public (22 of whom were engaged in acts of trespass and two whilst using a level crossing).
- There were also 271 deaths as a result of suicide or suspected suicide (250 in 2017-18, 239 in 2016/17).

In addition, the AHSR gives a summary of industry efforts to

reduce the number of suicides, including reference to working with the Samaritans and the 2,000 interventions by BT Police, railway staff and members of the public, a 30% increase on the previous year.^{xii}

- Of the 548 major injuries:
 - 377 were passengers (354 in 2017-18);
 - 158 staff (169 in 2017-18);
 - 13 public (including 12 trespassers).

What are the trends in workforce safety?

The AHSR has a section on workforce safety^{xiii} that begins with the following summary which reps should take a note of:

- There were two workforce fatalities in 2018/2019, both involving infrastructure workers;
- The risk to staff on or about the running line accounts for 33% of all accidental risk to workforce on the mainline railway. As such, it is the largest area of harm affecting workforce safety;
- The level of workforce harm regarding freight operations has gone up (but apart from stating that workforce harm for freight workers represents 3% of all injuries,^{xiv} no specific figures appear in the AHSR);
- Most major incidents in yards, depots or sidings are split between slips, trips and falls and contact with objects, the former category usually doubling the latter;

- Harm to workforce on trains is seeing a steady, yet slow, incremental rise;
- The overall trend in workforce assaults appears to be gradually rising, with a more pronounced rise evident in assaults on station staff.

Behind this summary there are other details presented in the Report that identify trends in workforce safety.

Amongst these trends are that:

1. Staff working on or about the running line: Infrastructure workers bear the most risk on the running line. Prior to the incident at Stoats Nest Junction in November of last year, it had been nearly five years since a track worker was struck and killed by a train. However, RAIB Chief Inspector, Simon French, in his review of 2018^{xv} said:

“There have been too many near misses in which workers have had to jump for their lives at the last moment. In the case of the near miss at Egmonton in October 2017 (RAIB Report 11/2018), a multi-fatality accident was only avoided with two seconds to spare.”

The Chief Inspector went onto add: “...the number and type of near misses in recent years is deeply disappointing given the efforts made to address track worker safety during that time. Every near miss, however caused, should be viewed as a failure of the system to deliver safety.”

TSSA made a submission to the Williams Rail Review on the issue of

Track Worker Safety and drew attention to the 128 near miss incidents reported between February 2017 and June 2018, as well as 124 line blockage irregularities in a similar period. Our submission to Williams also drew attention to potential causes for these occurrences and began by highlighting the safety triangle effect that means each of these incidents and irregularities makes the chance of fatalities ever more likely – and all at a time when GB rail is seen as the safest in the EU. The RSSB report picks up on some of these issues and notes the RAIB’s class investigation into signaller performance. RAIB has previously published a similar class report into track worker safety and continues to update the progress made over the issues identified.^{xvi}

2. Workforce major injuries

Category	2018-19	2017-18
Slips, trips and falls	74	78
Contact with object	40	45
Electric shock	3	1
Manual handling	0	4
Platform edge incidents	9	11
Road traffic accidents	4	3
On-board injuries	16	16
Other accidents	12	11
Total	158	169

It should also be noted that 72 of the 158 major injuries experienced by railway workers occurred to people working on or about the running line,

most resulting from slips, trips and falls or contact with an object.

3. Road driving risk: relates to those members of the workforce who “travel by means of a motorised vehicle between sites while on duty or travelling to and from their home to a non-regular place of work, including door-to-door taxi provision.”^{xvii} It does not include commuting from home to the worker’s usual place of work.

The first thing to emphasise is that road driving is becoming an increasingly important element that affects workers as the fact that of the 20 workers killed on duty, 10 died in road traffic accidents (including at least 6 infrastructure workers killed between 2011/12 and 2016/17).

In 2018-19, there were no fatalities from road driving but there were 4 major injuries from road driving (2 in Network Rail and two amongst contractor staff). In addition, 108 minor injuries were caused by road driving accidents with RSSB’s figures^{xviii} indicating the majority of such accidents were caused by third parties.

4). Staff working on trains or at stations: At stations, there were 38 major injuries including:

- 21 due to slips, trips and falls
- 8 connected with the platform/train interface
- 5 caused by assault/abuse

There was also 1487 minor injuries.

On trains, there were 16 major injuries, half of which were attributable to slips, trips and falls and a further five due to

contact with an object/awkward body movement.

5). Assaults: Amongst the AHSR’s headlines in relation to assault is that describing how: “The overall trend in workforce assaults appears to be gradually rising, with a more pronounced rise evident in assaults on station staff.”^{xix}

The evidence for this assertion is that in 2018-19, there were 938 assaults (848 in 2017-18) on members of the workforce that led to injury, shock and/or trauma;

- Assaults on station staff have substantially increased in each of the last four year (ie, since 2015-16) and are the highest amongst TOC staff;
- Assaults on other TOC staff (Revenue Protection, Train Drivers and On-Board Train Crew) has either reduced or remained about the same.
- AHSR does not list any assaults on non TOC staff.

Further, research conducted by the RSSB^{xx} and involving 700 members of station staff from seven TOCs found that:

- Most respondents (94%) reported they had experienced workplace abuse in the last twelve months;
- Verbal abuse was the most prevalent type of incident experienced;
- Workplace abuse is common, 69.3% of respondents indicating that they experienced

workplace abuse either weekly or daily;

- The two most frequently reported situations triggering abusive behaviours was the person being under the influence of alcohol or drugs and a train being late.

A research brief^{xxi} link from AHSR also showed that:

- 54.5% of respondents either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they felt anxious about the possibility of encountering abuse from customers in the course of their daily work;
- Workplace abuse has the potential to spill over into the work/family interface as well as affect employee motivation to provide good customer service. 60.5% of respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they thought about instances of abuse from customers even when they were not at work, whilst 58% indicated that customers abuse affected their motivation to provide good customer service.
- There is a low level of employee awareness of support that is available, and there are variable approaches between companies.

Injuries from Assault and Trauma

Injury	2018-19	2017-18
Major	6	7
Minor	420	375

Shock Trauma	512	466
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5). In Yards, depots and sidings:

there were 29 major injuries (45 in 2017-18).^{xxii}

Reps Action

The advice and recommended actions for TSSA reps are:

- a). Familiarise yourself with the RSSB reports;
- b). Review any accident reports that have been made by your colleagues so that you can see whether the trends in AHSR relate to your workplace – or whether they show something different where you are based;
- c). Get involved with any investigation that takes place after an accident or incident occurring to those people you speak up for (including for near misses);
- d). Participate in your local safety committee.
- e). Be aware of the wider context because the AHSR reports accidents and incidents and does not report how workers are affected by past contact with asbestos, silica dust or other disease causing substances.

Acknowledgements and references

This Bulletin has been written based on the RSSB's *Annual Health & Safety Report: A reference guide to trends on GB railways 2018-2019*.

ⁱ Available at: <http://www.tssa.org.uk/en/rep- area/rep- bulletins/health--safety/index.cfm>

ⁱⁱ See “Key Charts from the Annual Health and Safety Report 2018-19” downloadable from: <https://www.rssb.co.uk/en/Standards-and- Safety/Improving-Safety-Health-- Wellbeing/Monitoring-safety/Safety-Performance- Reports>

ⁱⁱⁱ See Page 29, AHSR downloadable from: <https://www.rssb.co.uk/en/Standards-and- Safety/Improving-Safety-Health-- Wellbeing/Monitoring-safety/Safety-Performance- Reports>

^{iv} See Page 28 of AHSR

^v See Page 147 of AHSR

^{vi} See Page 132 of AHSR

^{vii} See Page 1 of AHSR

^{viii} SMIS: Safety Management Intelligence System

^{ix} See Page 2 of AHSR

^x See: <https://www.rssb.co.uk/en/Standards-and- Safety/Improving-Safety-Health-- Wellbeing/Monitoring-safety/Safety-Performance- Reports> (Note: to access the report will require an online account to be created).

^{xi} This classification appears to be different to that of Passenger/Train Interface because none of the

seven incidents was connected with boarding a train – see page 59 of AHSR

^{xii} See Page 45 of AHSR

^{xiii} See Chapter 9, page 99, AHSR

^{xiv} See Page 106, AHSR

^{xv} RAIB Annual Report 2018, published 30th April 2019 and available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/798651/AR_2018_190430.pdf

^{xvi} RAIB “Report 07/2017: Track workers class investigation”, published 13th April 2017 and available at: <https://www.gov.uk/raib-reports/track-workers-class-investigation>

^{xvii} Definition used at Page 67 of ASPR 2017-18

^{xviii} See Page 71, AHSR

^{xix} See Page 121 of AHSR

^{xx} Four findings reported in AHSR at Page 127

^{xxi} *Research in Brief: Common rail health environments and roles, and their impacts on employees’ health and wellbeing T1085*, July 2018 at: <https://catalogues.rssb.co.uk/library/research-development-and-innovation/research-brief-T1085.pdf>

^{xxii} See Page 108 of AHSR