SSRB remit letter: 2021 pay round

If you use assistive technology (such as a screen reader) and need a version of this document in a more accessible format, please email publiccorrespondence@cabinetoffice.gov.uk. Please tell us what format you need. It will help us if you say what assistive technology you use.

Ministry of Justice statement in fee-paid judicial litigation: December 2020

Ministry of Justice statement in fee-paid judicial litigation: December 2020

Help us improve GOV.UK

To help us improve GOV.UK, we'd like to know more about your visit today. We'll send you a link to a feedback form. It will take only 2 minutes to fill in. Don't worry we won't send you spam or share your email address with anyone.

Email address

Send me the survey

Report 15/2020: Near miss between a passenger train and cars at Norwich Road level crossing

Press release

RAIB has today released its report into a near miss between a passenger train and cars at Norwich Road level crossing, New Rackheath, Norfolk, 24 November 2019.

View of Norwich Road level crossing about four seconds before the train reached the crossing (train forward-facing CCTV courtesy of Greater Anglia)

R152020_201214_Norwich Road

PDF, 6.69MB, 41 pages

This file may not be suitable for users of assistive technology.

Request an accessible format.
If you use assistive technology (such as a screen reader) and need a version of this document in a more accessible format, please email enquiries@raib.gov.uk. Please tell us what format you need. It will help us if you say what assistive technology you use.

Summary

On 24 November 2019, the barriers at Norwich Road level crossing, near New Rackheath, Norfolk, lifted as a passenger train from Norwich to Sheringham was approaching. Two road vehicles crossed the railway in front of the train,

which reached the crossing less than half a second after the second road vehicle was clear.

The investigation found that there was contamination of the railhead in the area caused by leaf-fall and atmospheric conditions. This contamination had not been removed because there were no railhead treatment trains on the Norwich to Sheringham line at weekends. The narrow band on which trains' wheels were running on the contaminated railhead, which was a consequence of the introduction of new trains, left the wheel-rail interface vulnerable to a poor electrical contact in the event of contamination. This caused the level crossing equipment to misinterpret the position of the train, and consequently it opened the crossing to road traffic while the train was closely approaching.

Recommendations

RAIB has made three recommendations addressed to Network Rail regarding the planning of autumn railhead treatment, guidance on the introduction of new trains and the configuration control of signalling equipment. RAIB also identified two learning points concerning the investigation of incidents and the signalling design process.

Simon French, Chief Inspector of Rail Accidents said:

"All too often the interaction between road users and the railway at level crossings leads to incidents and accidents. In many cases the actions of the road user are the immediate cause, but in this alarming event, deficiencies in the way the railway equipment operated placed two car drivers, and the people on a passenger train, in deadly danger through no fault of their own.

"Our investigation found that the installation at Norwich Road level crossing was a poor piece of engineering which had been in use for several years, and only luck had previously prevented an accident. A change in the type of train using the line exposed a weakness in the way that the crossing's electronic control equipment was configured. This meant that the system lost sight of the approaching train and commanded the barriers to rise. Lessons from the trial of the crossing equipment in other locations, and from incidents involving the same equipment in service, had not been applied to the crossing at Norwich Road. It is important that the railway industry learns from this incident, and makes sure that it has effective processes in place to transfer such learning to where it is needed."

Notes to editors

1. The sole purpose of RAIB investigations is to prevent future accidents and incidents and improve railway safety. RAIB does not establish blame, liability or carry out prosecutions.

2. RAIB operates, as far as possible, in an open and transparent manner. While our investigations are completely independent of the railway industry, we do maintain close liaison with railway companies and if we

discover matters that may affect the safety of the railway, we make sure that information about them is circulated to the right people as soon as possible, and certainly long before publication of our final report.

3. For media enquiries, please call 07814 812293.

Newsdate: 14 December 2020

Published 14 December 2020

Review on barriers to online and on-screen assessment published

News story

An Ofqual review has found IT provision, security and staffing issues are some of the barriers to the adoption of online and on-screen assessments in England.

An Ofqual review published today has identified the key barriers to greater adoption of online and on-screen assessments in high stakes qualifications such as GSCEs and A Levels.

The review, commenced prior to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, focused on the operational barriers to delivery.

The evidence came from 3 sources: a review of research literature, a workshop with informed stakeholders, and interviews both with experts and with leaders who have introduced on-screen or online assessments elsewhere – New Zealand, Finland and Israel.

This work is particularly timely, with and increasing interest in online

assessment in the wake of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The review, however, found five major barriers associated with taking this approach. None are insurmountable, given the will, but together they do confirm that we could not move large-scale standardised tests (such as A levels) on line in the immediate future.

1. IT provision in schools and colleges: current provision and the ability to prepare, at pace, varies widely. Different devices and browsers/operating systems could lead to compatibility issues with the tests and differences in performance, disadvantaging some students. The cost of additional IT provision would be significant.

2. Insufficient or unreliable internet and local network capabilities: substantial local differences (and issues in rural areas) were a major concern.

3. Staffing: a lack of specialist IT staff and issues around training other staff (teachers, examinations officers) were raised by schools and colleges.

4. Security: school and college experience was often limited to managing security for paper-based examinations and variability in IT infrastructure would make security risks difficult to manage consistently.

5. Planning: the most effective approaches to introducing online/on-screen testing depended on large-scale, collaborative efforts, with clear system leadership, investment, piloting and a well-considered appetite for risk. Robust risk management plans and mitigations and robust disaster recovery were needed. This would be highly challenging to implement in the timescales available.

The review also examined measures which might be taken to overcome the main barriers. While these must address the unique context of each jurisdiction, key themes include the importance of political support for any transition, commitment to a vision for the role that assessing on-screen or online plays in wider societal changes and a well-considered approach to addressing the inevitable risks of implementation.

While the barriers to on-screen assessment at scale in 2021 are significant and likely insurmountable, this report is intended to stimulate wider discussion on the future role that the use of technology may play in improving the validity and security of high stakes assessments taken in schools and colleges.

Published 14 December 2020