

Safety Advice

Action required following a serious incident



Systems of work requiring touch lookouts

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

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Overview

The new Safety Task Force established this week has determined there should be an immediate change when work on the track would require a touch lookout to warn staff of an approaching train.

The risk control hierarchy requires us to consider and where reasonably practicable use safer systems of work than unassisted lookouts when planning and undertaking work on the track. That is especially applicable to tasks where noise from hand tools or other plant requires a touch lookout.

It is always preferable to use any noisy equipment in a possession or a line blockage with additional protection to remove the need for lookouts and moving out of the path of train movements. Hearing protection must in any case be worn.

Where work with noisy plant is still planned to take place on open lines and therefore requiring touch lookouts, there must now be additional senior line manager approval for each specific work task.

Each such task must be specifically authorised in advance by the Infrastructure Maintenance Engineer (IME) (or equivalent) or more senior manager. That IME must challenge the planned system of work and where possible secure a safer method of protection before it takes place.

If the work cannot be done in a safer system than with touch lookouts, the IME must satisfy themselves about the competences and experience of the specific staff in the work group and the rigour of site supervision. The system must be tested by the COSS or Safe Work Leader before any work begins to make sure the system is suitable and safe.

Route and project assurance should sample the records of touch lookout tasks submitted for IME etc authorisation and check these additional controls are being applied effectively.

Immediate action required

- Every task with a system of work that requires a touch lookout must be specifically authorised by the IME (or equivalent).

Discussion Points

1. Why is it important to test your safe system of work before starting work?
2. What should you do if you are not happy with the method of warning being provided?
3. What work do you do that could impact your ability to hear warnings?