

SAFETY ALERT

Learning From Incidents

Shared Learning**3rd July 2026****Substandard COSS Briefings****Summary**

At Wixams Rail Systems site on Sunday 28th June, the Controller of Site Safety (COSS) in the capability of Person In Charge (PIC), gave an inadequate recorded COSS brief to the site team.

The briefing from the PIC did not meet the requirements of the Rule Book or relevant Network Rail standards, was not cohesive, structured and comprehensive.

None of the other members of the team challenged the quality of the site briefing.

Using the Network Rail Fair Culture Flowchart, the outcome of the investigation was that the PIC actions were a contravention or slip/lapse of judgement.

Background

Survey works was being undertaken to support the Wixams Rail Systems project on Sunday 28th June 2026.

The works are part of the portfolio of works commissioned under the SRSA framework. This was shift 2 of 2. Shift 1 was briefed by another PIC.

The survey team consisted of five staff members.

To align to NR/L2/OPS/301, the PIC had self-recorded the COSS briefing he gave to the team. The briefing took place adjacent to the access point in the access point compound.

References

1. Handbook 7 (issue 10) of GERT8000 (the Rule Book) is the handbook on general duties of COSS. Clause 7 details the COSS Briefing.
2. NR/L2/OHS/019 (issue 13), is the standard for safety of people at work on or near the line. Clause 5.3 details briefing the workgroup before starting works.
3. NR/L2/CTM/021 (issue 5) is the standard for competence and training in track worker safety. Clause 14.10.3 details briefing the group. Clause 14.11 details the influencing factors that affect the competence, specifically safety leadership and Non-Technical Skills (NTS).
4. NR/L2/OPS/301 (issue 1) provides a process to mitigate risks to Network Rail caused by inadequate safety critical communication.

Reflection and reminders

1. Poor standards of communication have played a significant part in recent incidents and near misses across the railway network.
2. Following a [Serious operational irregularity at Balham](#) in April 2019, Network Rail have worked to improve safety critical communications, resulting in publication of NR/L2/OHS/301 – Management of Safety Critical Communications.
3. It is now a requirement for safety critical communications to be recorded.
4. In carrying out safety critical duties, staff must use the correct communication protocols when passing messages onto colleagues, regardless of the familiarity with the staff they are working with or the task being undertaken.
5. Stop work procedures (e.g. Network Rail Worksafe Procedure, Colas Rail Free to be Safe, and AECOM Red Card) provide staff the explicit authority to halt operations immediately if they believe a task is unsafe. All staff should ensure they are familiar with the procedure and more importantly use it at the appropriate times.
6. If you observe a colleague not following the correct protocols or procedures, call them out and if necessary, invoke the stop work procedure and have a discussion. It's not whistle blowing, it's potentially stopping an accident, incident or near miss.
7. Improving our behavioural safety culture isn't just a top-down approach, it also must be a bottom-up approach with all staff willing to participate. "Fair and Just Culture" policies exist to fix and improve systems rather than allocate blame.

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