

Rail Plant Association Update

RPA Acting-Chairperson Paul Helks reports on the current initiatives of the association for road/rail plant owners.

Her Majesty the Queen may she rest in peace

As we head into the shorter daylight hours and a changing weather front, leaving behind an incredible summer, we are left to seasonally adjust. I feel this time of year for me is very reflective. Massive changes have occurred in the last few days, recent months and throughout the pandemic years for all of us. In many ways, these monumental events, have and will change the way we live and work. Reflecting for me, must bring positivity. There are always lessons learned, there are always opportunities borne from challenging and difficult times.

I hope you read on through this article and I urge you to take time to reflect on what we as an association and wider rail community can improve upon. There are great efforts on many fronts being collaborated upon. But there is more we can achieve to enhance our industry. Times are tough, and we must unite on many fronts to make our Great British Rail (GBR) a true success.

RPA Consultant position update

An RPA Members' meeting was held on the 10th August to discuss the vacant RPA Consultant position following David Simmons' retirement from the role in September 2020. During the meeting, there was a clear mandate from the RPA members present that there is a requirement for the Association to engage the services of an RPA Consultant, who would primarily and effectively represent the collective views/concerns of the RPA membership, at the highest possible level within Network Rail/GBR, Tier 1 Contractors and other industry stakeholders. Shortly after the meeting, a brief survey was sent out to all RPA members inviting their suggestions to help identify the key issues and concerns that are negatively impacting the sector and an RPA Consultant could potentially assist the Association to resolve. The feedback from the membership has now been collated and the key strategic areas of concern have been identified for the Association to focus on. We look forward to updating the membership and readers of this article on the progress of this initiative in the next article.

RAIB Report Ramsden Bellhouse

Two of our valued members were directly involved in the Ramsden Bellhouse Road/Rail Vehicle (RRV) collision in May 2021. The RAIB report was keen to show that one of the RRV operators was likely to be fatigued at the time of the accident, which resulted in life-changing injuries for a MEWP operator.

The RRV operator's employer did undertake their fatigue management duties properly and thoroughly by completing the HSE fatigue risk calculator. The employer's HSE calculator was completed for each day worked, dating back to the start of 2012. The RRV operator was a 'zero hours' worker who had full-time employment, like most of the RRV operator community, outside the rail industry. To be as accurate as they could, the employer defaulted to including 10 hours per day Monday to Friday, to help them calculate



Collective Mark

fatigue effectively. Albeit the investigation found that the RRV operator's 'actual' hours worked were less than 10 per day.

For the weekend of the accident, using Google Maps, it was identified a hotel was needed before and after the operator's shift due to a travel time each way exceeding two hours (the shift planned was a 12-hour nightshift). However, the RRV operator chose not to use the hotel before the shift started. Irrespective of the workload being very low during the shift, it could not be argued that fatigue played a significant part in this accident.

What do we do? The latest version of the Network Rail Fatigue Management Standard is live from 29th October. It is a standard that details the 'minimum' requirements for employers managing their workers' fatigue, but it is far more difficult to implement in a 'zero-hours or sole trade' community. Network Rail has, for many years, shifted the midweek work opportunities - allowing its suppliers to employ full-time staff - to weekend only and, therefore, forcing the supply chain to rely on agencies or zero-hours workers. By nature, workers want to earn. Who knows what hours the zero-hours community are working outside the rail industry or how intense that work is. Knowing the restrictions around working on the railway, are they inclined to lie about their non-rail work in order to get shifts?

These are important questions, and many of the RPA members are dealing with these additional challenges every week.

Recommendations after Ramsden Bellhouse

The RAIB has made three recommendations. Two of these are addressed to Network Rail and include the need to clarify the role of a Machine Controller when they are travelling with their vehicle, as well as the need to continue the development of obstacle detection for RRVs. A third recommendation is made to SPL Powerlines UK and Readypower Rail Services, relating to the application of learning from previous accidents and incidents.

The RAIB has also identified four learning points. These alert operators to the need for bringing vehicles to a stand when forward vision is lost, and the importance of judging and observing the correct safe distance between moving vehicles. It is also important that staff are fit and appropriately prepared when reporting for duty and comply with all RRV operating instructions. The full report and others can be viewed on the RAIB web page.

All change at No. 10

As Prime Minister Liz Truss takes office, appointments of new ministers have been made. The transport sector has a new secretary in Anne-Marie Trevelyn. As they look at industrial sectors, which can help with the

UK's future success and prosperity, the railway supply chain is ready and willing to play its part in delivering plans to generate economic growth, to level up and help the government deliver its net zero targets. As we all know, rail is key to the UK's future. It is clear that rail not only has a prosperous future, but can play a key role in the wider national recovery, in what are uncertain times ahead.

To enable the rail plant community to fully support these strategies, there are key elements that must be addressed and agreed upon. There are some key points below, but many of the finer points will be carried forward through the consultation process previously mentioned in the article. Ensuring transparency and certainty of work-bank to enable members to make practical investment decisions on plant and machinery acquisition, as well as development and future proofing of that equipment, is vital.

Hand-in-hand with this is the investment in our people; future recruitment, growth and upskilling is imperative. If we do not act upon these key elements in a collaborative approach immediately, the short-term goals maybe achieved, but the future mid-term and long-term strategies will be hindered.

Standards review

A standards review will soon be available on the RPA website and we will signpost all members to this update when we publish the results. In the meantime, here are some highlights:

■ **Fatigue Risk Management NR/L2/OHS/003** - Compliance date 29th October 2022. To assist with your preparedness for the compliance date, follow the link below for Network Rail Safety Central: <https://safety.networkrail.co.uk/fatigue-improvement-programme/> More material to assist on this subject can also be found on the RSSB and the ORR websites.

■ **Drugs, alcohol and substance misuse in the workplace NR/L2/OHS/00120** - Compliance date 3rd March 2022. Key changes include all employees can be randomly selected for a drugs and alcohol test whilst at a Network Rail workplace.



Paul Helks, Acting-Chairperson, RPA.

The supply chain will continue to randomly test only safety-critical employees. A total of 20% of all staff will be randomly selected for a drugs and alcohol test each year. The supply chain will randomly test 20% of its safety-critical employees. All prospective candidates will undergo and pass a drugs and alcohol test prior to joining Network Rail. The supply chain will continue to test only safety-critical candidates. All drugs tests will be conducted using Point of Contact Testing (PoCT). The supply chain can use either PoCT or back to lab testing. An improved support programme

for any employee who has a drugs and/or alcohol misuse concern. The supply chain is expected to have a drugs and alcohol support programme in place for employees.

■ **Rule Book Handbook 15 GERT8000 Issue 6** *Issued: 3rd September 2022, published: 3rd September 2022, in force: 3rd December 2022, next review: 3rd December 2023.* **Duties of the Machine Controller and on-track plant operator.** You will need this handbook if you carry out the duties of the Machine Controller and on-track plant operator. A new section has been added at

10.4 describing the actions necessary when a Machine Controller requests line protection for work to be carried out on a rail vehicle.

Talk to us

Thank you for reading this latest article. The RPA Management Committee is always open to discussion with members and non-members. Please have a look at the RPA website, which can be found on the CPA website as normal. <https://www.cpa.uk.net/special-interest-groups/rail-plant-association-rpa>

Stay Well, Stay Safe.

