

Report 12/2016: Passenger accident at Hayes & Harlington station

On publication of RAIB's report concerning a 'trap and drag' accident involving a passenger at Hayes & Harlington station, Simon French, Chief Inspector of Rail Accidents, said:

"RAIB's role is the independent investigation of accidents in order to improve railway safety and inform the industry and public. During the last ten years of fulfilling this important role, we have investigated a total of eight accidents on the main-line network in which train dispatch was a factor. These have included dispatch by platform staff (2), guards (2) and drivers (4). In five of these cases a passenger became trapped in a train door and was subsequently dragged as the train departed. In three of these 'trap and drag' accidents the train dispatch was managed by the driver rather than a guard or platform staff - a method of operation commonly known as 'Driver Only Operation' (DOO).

"Since RAIB is now publishing its report concerning a 'trap and drag' accident involving a passenger at Hayes & Harlington station in July 2015, I would like to highlight three important safety lessons from all of our investigations into accidents of this type. These are:

- train doors can trap hands, or objects such as bag straps and clothing, and door interlocks may not always detect their presence (so enabling the train to drive out of the platform)
- it can sometimes be difficult for passengers to remove hands or objects that are trapped in closed train doors
- the great importance of dispatchers, be they station staff, guards or drivers, always performing a thorough final safety check to confirm that it is safe to depart.

"The investigation into the accident at Hayes & Harlington revealed a widespread lack of understanding of these points among some train crew and their managers. It was for this reason that we issued an Urgent Safety Advice on 30 November 2015 reminding train operating companies and their staff of the absolute necessity of carrying out the final check after the doors are closed, to confirm that nobody is trapped in the doors or too close to the train.

"Although our investigations cover too small a sample for us to draw conclusions about the relative safety of different methods of train dispatch, we have found no evidence to suggest that driver only operated trains cannot be dispatched safely. However, as for all methods of train dispatch, safety is dependent on:

- the provision of suitable equipment (eg cameras and CCTV monitors)
- rigorous compliance with safety rules by trained operating staff
- effective management of risk at stations, particularly where visibility is poor or platforms are crowded."

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