

Report 13/2016: Freight train collision near Logan, East Ayrshire

On publication of RAIB's report concerning a freight train collision near Logan, East Ayrshire, Simon French, Chief Inspector of Rail Accidents, said:

“Collisions between trains within a work site create the potential for very serious harm to those involved, major damage and days of disruption to the travelling public. I believe that our report on the collision near Logan will provide an important insight into the types of issues that need to be addressed if the risk is to be more effectively managed.

“Train movements within work sites and possessions are not regulated by normal railway signalling systems – which is why special care is needed to make sure that trains are always able to stop in the distance that the driver can see to be clear, and that communications between drivers and engineering staff are precise and mutually understood.

“In the past ten years there have been six significant collisions between trains in work sites. A number of recommendations have been made by RAIB to address the ways that movements of trains in work sites are regulated, and ways of ensuring clear and accurate communications. Although I am disappointed that these recommendations have not yet led to substantive action to fix the problem, I am encouraged to see that the railway industry has now decided to reconsider some of the issues.

“Driving heavy freight trains over long distances within a work site or possession, and ensuring that the train can stop in the distance seen to be clear, is a very different challenge to driving a freight train on an open line. ‘Line of sight driving’ at speeds above 5 mph requires high levels of discipline and concentration, as well as detailed knowledge of the line ahead so that drivers do not find themselves travelling too fast. I hope that RAIB's recommendations will lead to a careful evaluation of:

- what practical steps can be taken to reduce the lengths of worksites
- the skills needed to drive freight trains over long distances without the protection of signals in work sites and possessions
- the human factors that may influence the behaviour of drivers and their ability to drive trains at an appropriate speed in work sites and possessions
- ways of monitoring the performance of drivers when driving in work sites and possessions
- ways of conveying important information to drivers when entering work sites and possessions so as to minimise the risk of confusion and misunderstandings.”

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