



ASSOCIATION of TRAIN OPERATING COMPANIES

To : Category 1 Responders

1st November 2006

Introducing RAIL INCIDENT CARE TEAMS

Britain's rail industry now has in place a capability to respond positively and proactively to the needs of those individuals directly affected by rail related incidents through the establishment of Rail Incident Care Teams. Details of how, when and where these teams will function, along with their role and examples of what they will and will not do are included below. However, it is worth stressing from the outset that the intention is to complement and support Category 1 (and other Category 2) responders in such a way as to provide the best possible service to survivors and their friends/relatives. We are confident that our teams have the necessary training, equipment and access to funds to do this. They, alone among the responding agencies, are able to provide the recognition, acknowledgement of and regret for the personal losses incurred on behalf of company whose train has been involved, the presence or absence of which has been shown repeatedly to be a major contributory factor in how quickly and how completely those involved are able to subsequently move on from their personal tragedies.

At the same time, we very much recognise that the onus is on us to approach Category 1 (and other Category 2) responders, initially to make them aware of our existence and capabilities (and better appreciate theirs) and from this start to build up mutual respect and confidence. Our aim is to be seen as equal and valued partners, explicitly incorporated in police/local authority emergency response plans and invited (where appropriate) to play a full and active role both in advance in multi-agency exercises and on the day at the various reception centres set up following an event and in particular the humanitarian assistance centre itself. The information below is intended as but a start to this process - beyond this we are keen to meet up with other responding agencies, and with local authorities in particular, to explore in detail how Rail Incident Care Teams can be used to best effect as part of the multi agency response to rail incidents.

Background

Britain's Passenger Train Operating Companies take their responsibilities for the security, safety and general wellbeing of their customers extremely seriously. Clearly this must be irrespective of whether the journey being made is one of the vast majority which will be completed routinely and uneventfully, or one of those occasions, thankfully extremely rare, when the unthinkable happens.

In recognition of this, the last few years have seen a major refocusing of the rail industry's emergency response arrangements. In particular, these have been expanded such that the traditional 'head' focused approach is now mirrored by a 'heart' capability. Rail companies are thus now well placed to support the humanitarian response provided to those individuals unfortunate enough to have been involved in or directly affected by major rail related incidents. Key to this has been the setting up of **Rail Incident Care Teams.**

Why have Incident Care Teams?

Apart from a natural extension of routine 'customer care' responsibilities as already referred to above, research over many years into what has been helpful to survivors of mass transportation disasters very clearly demonstrates that lack of engagement on the part of the company with whom they (or their friends/relatives) were travelling is a major source of resentment. This it-self then acts as a major and long term obstacle to their subsequently achieving a new equilibrium.

Those who suffer serious injury or bereavement will live with the psychological impact for the remainder of their lives. However, there is ample evidence that those who receive immediate support and acknowledgement¹ of their loss from the transport provider are likely to more quickly and more completely transcend the event and find new meaning in their lives than those who do not.

This is the one element of the overall humanitarian response which the rail company is uniquely placed to provide.

What is a Rail Incident Care Team?

Very simply, it is a team of specially selected volunteers who have been trained in how to respond to the needs of survivors (i.e. those directly involved and their friends/family) in the hours and days immediately following any event requiring a humanitarian response and who would be activated accordingly.

All Team members - of which there are currently some 350 nationally - have received identical specialist training. This provides them with the knowledge, skills and confidence necessary to most effectively respond to the needs of survivors, while at the same time taking care of their own health and family responsibilities. Regular refresher training and exercising also take place.

When will a Rail Incident Care Team be deployed?

Although the main impetus for the setting up of Rail Incident Care Teams is the major accident or incident, Team members will be deployed to any rail related event where some form of humanitarian assistance is needed - this could include helping passengers who have been a victim of or witnessed abuse or crime, or those who have been trapped in a broken down train for an extended period.

Where will a Rail Incident Care Team be deployed?

In the event of an rail related incident, team members will be deployed where they will be most effective in providing support to those who need it. For the most part, and upon invitation, this will initially be in hospitals and the various reception and assistance centres established to receive those directly involved and their friends and families. In the ensuing days, the focus is likely to shift more towards the Humanitarian Assistance Centre and perhaps visiting survivors and their families at their homes (or hotels).

It is *not* the intention that Team members will attend the site of the incident itself.

¹ It should be stressed that this 'acknowledgement' of their situation is quite independent of acceptance of any responsibility for the event (and indeed it will typically be many days or even months before the full circumstances have been identified and analysed).

How will a Rail Incident Care Team function?

Rail Incident Care Teams are intended very much to work alongside and complement other responding agencies - they are *not* there to replace them.

At the operational level, Team members will usually be working with a colleague or colleagues depending on the numbers required to provide support and assistance to the injured and their families. The intention is that they will make early contact with and work particularly closely with Police Family Liaison Officers and also designated hospital contacts.

The need to provide mutual support throughout the rail industry is central to the concept of Care Teams. Thus the response to a single incident might, depending on its nature, scale and location, directly involve Care Teams drawn from a number individual Train Operating Companies but functioning as a single team.

When deployed, Team members will display a distinctive photo-id card which identifies them not only as able to assist and support survivors but also as competent to do so, issue of the card being dependent on successful completion of the training course.

What sort of assistance will a Rail Incident Care Team provide?

The help offered to those directly involved and their friends/relatives is focused on the practical and will typically include the following:

- Acting as an enabler, facilitator, empowerer and ‘servant’ for survivors
- Providing information concerning the incident
- Providing information regarding supporting agencies to enable them to make decisions about what help and advice they might need
- Offering practical and emotional support to victims
- Communication support (e.g. internet access, phone calls, etc.)
- Arranging (and paying for) accommodation
- Arranging (and paying for) travel
- Arranging (and paying for) food
- Arranging (and paying for) replacement of lost or damaged clothes, personal items and other essential belongings
- Arranging (and paying for) repatriation of bodies
- Working with local authorities/social services to arrange child care, care of pets, etc.
- Assisting the Police in the return of personal effects
- Attending funeral and/or memorial services – *BUT ONLY IF REQUESTED BY FAMILIES*
- In general, responding to any other needs and concerns survivors may have and attempting to help out wherever possible

Rail Incident Care Team members will NOT provide specific counselling services (though would be in a position to put survivors in touch with the appropriate specialist agencies).

Where can I get further information on Rail Incident Care Teams?

For further information please contact Peter Lovegrove, Operations Support Manager, ATOC (020 7841 8154 or peter.lovegrove@atoc.org).