

Report 17/2017: Partial collapse of a wall onto open railway lines, Liverpool

On publication of RAIB's report concerning the partial collapse of a wall onto open railway lines, Liverpool Simon French, Chief Inspector of Rail Accidents said:

"The collapse of the cutting wall on this busy line just outside Liverpool Lime Street occurred without warning, and about 170 tonnes of rubble fell on the railway. It had the potential to crush or derail a passing train, with disastrous consequences.

"However, the signs that a dangerous situation was developing had been there for a long time. Network Rail's examination system did not pick up the significant changes that were taking place behind the wall due to earth moving activities undertaken by the occupier. Similar changes in land use can occur anywhere, especially in areas of urban regeneration. Although I recognise that it can be challenging for the railway industry, it is vital that Network Rail carries out regular and effective checks for activities on its boundaries that may endanger the integrity of its structures. Changes in technology mean that tools, such as aerial surveys, to improve the way in which such information is gathered and analysed, are now readily available.

"RAIB has made recommendations for the railway industry to put in place systems that will reliably detect threats to high risk structures, and cause prompt and appropriate action to be taken, to avoid a danger to the line. I hope that this investigation will result in a significant change to the way that the railway manages risk from its neighbours.

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