

Report 04/2017: Collision at Hockham Road user worked crossing, Thetford

On publication of RAIB's report concerning a collision at Hockham Road user worked crossing, Thetford, Simon French, Chief Inspector of Rail Accidents said:

“In recent years, the RAIB has become concerned about signaller error as a cause of accidents at level crossings where it is always necessary for vehicle drivers to telephone the signaller for permission to cross (ie user worked crossings with telephones). In addition to our investigation of the collision between a train and tractor at Hockham Road, 2016 saw the opening of two other investigations into dangerous occurrences of this type. In both cases people were given permission to cross the railway with vehicles when trains were too close for this to be done safely.

“Communicating with level crossing users will be one of many duties carried out by a signaller. In an environment where signalling control areas are becoming larger, and the number of crossings overseen by an individual signaller may often increase, it is important that the railway industry considers carefully the measures required to control the risk of signaller error leading to collision. Giving permission for users to cross the railway will often require signallers to carefully check the location of trains and estimate the time available for users to cross in safety. Although the reliability of such decisions is likely to be improved if signallers are provided with better information, it would be preferable to see, over the longer term, the progressive removal of crossings where the only form of protection is the telephone.

“We are recommending that Network Rail should undertake a review of its measures for the protection of such crossings with the objective of reducing the risk of signaller error.”

Newsdate: 14 March 2017