

Report 07/2019: Fatal accident at Stoats Nest Junction, Purley, 6 November 2018

On publication of RAIB's report concerning the fatal accident at Stoats Nest Junction, Purley, 6 November 2018, Simon French, Chief Inspector of Rail Accidents, said:

"This sad accident was the first in more than four years involving the death of a track worker who was struck by a train.

"When workers are employed on a casual basis on zero hours contracts, there can be great pressure for them to try and juggle multiple jobs to make ends meet. The possible effects of such patterns of employment on fatigue and fitness for work are significant. We are therefore recommending that the railway industry reviews the way it manages the use of staff on zero hours contracts, to minimise the risk associated with this pattern of work.

"The continuing requirement for people to go onto the track to place and remove red lamps and explosive detonators, as part of the arrangements for protecting engineering work on the railway, is something that RAIB has queried before. Following a fatality at Reading in 2007, and again after a near-miss in north London in 2017, we recommended that the railway industry should find ways of eliminating the need for people to be exposed to the risk of being struck by trains in these circumstances.

"Modern technology means that there are many ways in which the position of trains can be established, and warnings given to drivers and to track workers, if a train movement goes beyond a safe limit. I believe that the industry should continue to explore ways of eliminating the need for Victorian methods of protection on the twenty-first century railway. It is deeply saddening that another person has died while putting down protection for his fellow railway workers- there must be a better way."

"The need to better manage the continuing risk to those who work on the tracks has again been highlighted by the tragic death of two track workers who were struck and killed by a train at Margam, near Port Talbot, on 3 July. RAIB has started a detailed investigation into the causes of this dreadful event. This will clearly identify the lessons to be learnt and any necessary recommendations for the improvement of safety.

"My thoughts are with all those affected by both these tragic accidents."