

Track worker struck by a train near Surbiton station, south-west London, 9 February 2021

On publication of RAIB's report concerning the track worker struck by a train near Surbiton station, south-west London, 9 February 2021, Andrew Hall, Chief Inspector of Rail Accidents, said:

"As RAIB publishes its report on the tragic death of a track worker at Surbiton last year, our thoughts are with his family and friends.

"After a period of almost five years with no fatalities involving moving trains, track maintenance staff have died in accidents each year from 2018 to 2021.

"In 2019, two track workers were killed near Margam in south Wales, and our investigation found unsafe working practices that had not been detected by Network Rail's management assurance arrangements.

"At Surbiton, the accident happened probably because a patroller, who was carrying out inspections and was also responsible for the group's safe system of work, had become distracted and lost awareness of his position relative to the line the train approached on. The patrol was being undertaken with protection provided by unassisted lookouts. Although this was the usual practice for these inspections working with unassisted lookouts is the least safe type of system allowed for when working on track and this had not been challenged in the years leading up to the accident.

"We found evidence that people at the depot involved were aware of the Margam accident, but they were convinced that their circumstances were different and that the earlier lessons did not apply to them. Consequently, managers at the depot did not learn from the experience of Margam and continued to allow much work to be carried out under unassisted lookout protection.

"While Network Rail has made great strides in reducing the amount of track maintenance work undertaken when trains are running, it remains the case that many of the recommendations that we made in the Margam report are relevant to the accident at Surbiton. I urge everyone involved with track maintenance to look closely at what happened here, and learn from it, so that deaths at work on the line really do become a thing of the past."