

Rail Joint Integrity

In the country area of NSW maintenance staff was checking the rail gaps in a particular location. To provide adequate clearance, adjustment was required. A month later the track was inspected and it was found that metal had been cut from the rail at the track joins. This has in effect moved the holes for the connecting plates closer to the end of the rail, reducing the integrity of the track joins. This was reported to the acting manager, which commenced an investigation. It was alleged that on the return of the substantive manager, the matter was closed before the investigation was complete.

CSIRS Requirement

The Office of Transport Safety Investigation (OTSI) sought verification of the claims from the operator, as well as specific comment about the safety implications associated with such a practice.

Investigation outcome

Australian Rail Track Corporation advised that the current track managers were aware of the issue and that necessary steps have been taken to ensure the appropriate maintenance practices are being adhered to and that the track is safe for traffic at the appropriate speeds.

OTSI Action

OTSI has advised the reporter of the response, actions and plans provided by the responsible operator.

The Transport Safety Regulation Division of the Independent Transport Safety and Reliability Regulator has been advised of this occurrence so that it can monitor the effectiveness of Safety Actions undertaken and proposed by the operator.

The outcomes of the inquiries made by both OTSI and the responsible operator have been recorded in the OTSI Safety Investigation Database for future review and trend analysis.