

Confidential Safety Information Reporting Scheme

Railway Track Signals (Detonators)

A report was received that there were safety concerns about the provision of Rail Track Signals (detonators) in the driver's cab of an outer suburban passenger train. It was reported that a driver checked the safety equipment box and found that there were no detonators inside the box. He reported this to his supervisor and was told to drive to Wollongong where they were available. He was concerned that the request to continue driving without these safety devices was a breach of safety rules and procedures.

CSIRS Requirement

As part of the OTSI investigation, a Safety Valve Notification (SVN) was issued to NSW Trains asking them to address these concerns and to seek clarification of the current rules within NSW Trains in association with the supply of detonators as a safety device on trains.

Investigation outcome

NSW Trains advised that they had investigated the claim made by the reporter and they provided details of their investigation. An extract of this response follows.

Background

A change to the requirement for trains to carry Railway Track Signals was notified through a Permanent Safe Notice 040 from the 9th June 2013. The use of Railway Track Signals when protecting rail traffic or protecting an obstructed line is no longer required inside the following areas: The Sydney Suburban area bounded by Macarthur, Emu Plains, Waterfall and Cowan, and the Newcastle area bounded by Fassifern, Islington Junction and Newcastle.

When a train (H, T & V sets) is required to travel outside these areas, they must be in possession of Railway Track Signals.

General Instruction 1008-2013 issued on 13 September 2013, reminds drivers that it is a mandatory requirement for the above mentioned trains to carry Railway Track Signals.

Drivers are required to check the OK certificate on their train to confirm Railway Track Signals have been provided. If a driver cannot establish if Railway Track Signals are provided, they are to contact the Network Control Officer (NCO) prior to Penrith, Waterfall, Hornsby and Wollongong.

Drivers will be provided the required number of Railway Track Signals as per

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minimum standards for their consist.

It is noted, there is no rule which prevents a train from moving should Railway Track Signals be found missing from the train.

Railway Track Signals are provided at the front and the rear of set. On this occasion there was one pack of Railway Track Signals missing at the front of the train, however there were Railway Track Signals in the rear set of the train which the driver did not check ("Sorry didn't get back set") as stated on the Hazard Report form.

In the event the Railway Track Signals are missing or stolen from trains, NSW Trains has the following safety devices (train radio, mobile phone and track shorting clips) in place for train crew that will assist in the event of an emergency. Supplies of additional Railway Track Signals are maintained at major regional locations which are available to restock trains as required.

Actions

NSW Trains will implement the following actions: NSW Trainlink will request Sydney Trains as the maintainer of our rolling stock be more vigilant when conducting maintenance and inspection of our trains to ensure the correct amount of Railway Track Signals are in place and in date prior to issuing a train OK certificate allowing the train into service.

OTSI Action

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

OTSI has advised the reporter of the response and actions provided by NSW Trains.