

Confidential Safety Information Reporting Scheme

End of Train Marker Lights

A report was received that a number of Pacific National Trains were operating without End of Train Marker lights. It was alleged that in the Sydney, Melbourne and Parkes corridor, 90% of NR class locomotives did not have WB lights located in their respective kits. It was also alleged that an audit revealed that 40% of Pacific National freight train WB lights failed en route.

The reporter was concerned that there had been a number of incidents where the last wagon had detached from the rear of a train and had been left in the rail section. The red flashing WB light was a last line of defence to mitigate against rear-end collisions and was a critical safe working apparatus.

CSIRS Requirement

As part of the OTSI investigation, a Safety Valve Notification (SVN) was issued requesting that Pacific National investigate the claims made about the number of trains operating without End of Train Marker (ETM) lights.

Investigation outcome

Pacific National responded that a review of its incident reporting system over the past 4 months has indicated that there had been 13 reported incidents of ETM light failure. However, only two of these could be attributed to mechanical ETM light battery failure enroute. The other failures were as a direct result of Sensor Brake Unit failure, for example, end of train pipe pressure monitoring, end of train motion sensor and/or locomotive communication system failure. During this period approximately 2,000 train services were operated.

While Pacific National did not agree with the claims of a 40% enroute failure rate in the field, Pacific National did recognize that in some cases all ETM light failures might not be reported. To mitigate this risk, Pacific National issued a safety notice reminding drivers that it was a requirement to report all incidents of ETM light failure immediately to the Network owner and to the Pacific National Service Delivery Centre in accordance with Pacific National incident reporting requirements. Furthermore, as a part of the investigation, PN identified that there was no item on the Locomotive Provisioning Checklist to check that a spare ETM light was present within the engine room compartment; creating a risk that the ETM light might not be available enroute should the train ETM light fail. As a result of this, Pacific National initiated the following safety action:

- 1) Pacific National Asset Management have updated the relevant internal procedures to include the ETM as a specific item,

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- 2) Pacific National Asset Management will add the ETM as a specific item on the locomotive provisioning checklist for the driver to complete prior to pre-departure,
- 3) Pacific National will advise all train crews of this change to procedure through a safety notice communication.

These actions will eliminate the risk of a Locomotive departing without a fully functional ETM in the engine room compartment. In addition to the above, all national depots (including intermediate depots such as Parkes) have been checked and issued with a spare ETM. The process for ensuring that all depots will continue to have a fully functional ETM at all times is currently being reviewed.

A project is underway led by Asset Management with support from Operations to purchase new ETMs that are fully compliant with Australian Standard 7531.2 Railway Rollingstock - Lighting and Rolling Stock Visibility. A suitable device has now been identified and trials of these units are expected to commence within the next couple of months following the completion of the required consultation and risk assessment processes. If these trials prove to be successful Pacific National will proceed with the roll out of these new devices.

OTSI Action

The outcomes of the inquiries made by both OTSI and Pacific National 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 Pacific National.