

Confidential Safety Information Reporting Scheme

Extended Shifts

A report was received from a rail safety worker about the RailCorp track resurfacing team. It was alleged that:

'We were recently required to complete a 21½ hour shift on 5 May at Homebush. We commenced the shift at 11:00am on Sunday and were scheduled to finish at 10:30pm that evening. We were instructed to keep working and some of the work crew eventually finished at 8:30am and some finished at 7.30am the following day, a Monday morning. There were a number of workers on that shift nodding off at their machines. There was no provision for relief and no way could the machines be left. Some members of the work crew live on the Central Coast and some south of Wollongong and their drive home after these long shifts is a real concern. Also after completing this long shift we were required to backup for another shift at 8:00pm that Monday evening. This was not an isolated incident. The following weekend on 12 May we were working a 14½ hour shift at Dapto. On this occasion we started at 5:00am and finished at 7:30pm.'

CSIRS Requirement

As part of the OTSI investigation, a Safety Valve Notification (SVN) was issued to RailCorp asking them to investigate the claims made by the reporter, and if correct the reasons why these extended shifts were worked.

Investigation outcome

RailCorp advised OTSI of the results of their investigations, the following being their response.

'Background

Resurfacing teams are rostered to undertake the final shift on Sundays as their tamping works are the last in the sequence of works to restore track ready for the Monday morning peak hour traffic.

The teams are critical support to any projects where track is installed i.e. turnout renewals, track reconditioning, track reconstruction and bridge renewals. The teams are typically rostered for 11.5 hour shifts to maximise the amount of resurfacing to be completed in a possession. We currently have 5 resurfacing teams. To bring off roster teams back for a Sunday night shift in the event or a project overrun requires early advice that the project

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will overrun. This leaves resurfacing teams subject to the risk of project overruns requiring shift extension as was the case at Homebush.

Homebush 5 May 2013

Teams 2 and 3 (20 staff combined) shift times were rostered to commence work at 1100hrs on Sunday 5 May 2013 and finish at 2230hrs on 5 May 2013. At approximately 1600hrs the teams were informed of the late running bridge renewal and staff were canvassed regarding who was willing to stay beyond 2230hrs. All staff from Team 2 and most staff from Team 3 agreed to stay back, but two staff from Team 3 elected to finish at their programmed shift time of 2230hrs.

The cut off point to start tamping to return the tracks on time to rail operations was estimated at 2200hrs on Sunday. However, actual tamping operations did not commence until shortly after 0130hrs Monday 6 May 2013, concluding about 0400hrs. The machines, after completion of the works, proceeded to No. 1 Platform Strathfield Station where they were stabled awaiting permission from Network Operations to travel to North Strathfield.

As the bridge work was being assessed on a constant basis no accurate indication could be given on the exact time that tamping would commence. Therefore, in order to manage fatigue the staff that stayed back were not allocated work until tamping operations began just after 0130hrs.

Upon returning to their depot on Monday 06 May 2013 the staff were offered transport to their homes. Three staff members elected to be driven home in RailCorp vehicles. Six staff living locally declined assistance as they lived only a short distance away from the depot and assured the Team Manager that they were fit to drive home. The staff members who drove themselves home were requested to call the team manager upon reaching home. All staff complied with the request and reached their homes safely. Accommodation was arranged for the remaining staff as they lived outside the metropolitan area.

Dapto 12th May 2013

Team 2's planned shift times were 0500hrs to 1630hrs 12 May 2013 and they were programmed for tamping operations at Dapto Loop. Team 2 started duty at their allocated accommodation at 0500hrs on 12 May 2013 and travelled to the Dapto Loop track reconstruction site. The site was not ready for tamping upon arrival and Team 2 was not allocated work until the site was ready at 0830hrs.

At 1100 hrs the tamper machine broke down. Contractors repaired the tamper machine at 1200hrs, during this time Team 2 were allowed to have a rest break. From 1200hrs to 1620hrs Team 2 carried out tamping

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operations in Dapto Loop and then from 1620hrs to 1740hrs the machines travelled to Unanderra to stable. Team 2 travelled from 1740hrs to 1930hrs to their home depot at Clyde.

The team was offered the opportunity to stay in accommodation on 12 May 2013, but chose to travel back to their home depot at Clyde as they were rostered off duty 13 May 2013.

Actions

The Maintenance Directorate will implement the following actions;

- Improved monitoring of the progress of works prior to the shift commencement of the rostered resurfacing team and implement an escalation process to amend the shift commencement time of the rostered resurfacing team (if the project is running behind). Senior management to be contacted to make decisions depending on the forecast overrun.*
- If the shift has commenced and delays are forecast the project engineer on site will make a decision (or escalate decision making as appropriate depending on the probable length of the delay) to rest the team – if necessary accommodation will be arranged.*
- If the team is required to work into the early morning accommodation or transport home will be arranged.*

In addition to the above Infrastructure Renewals is in the process of engaging contract resurfacing resources to support some of our critical projects.'

OTSI Action

The outcomes of the inquiries made by both OTSI and RailCorp 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 RailCorp.