



Rail Industry Safety Notice



RISN No. 30

Controlled Signal Blocking

Background

At approximately 1:08 am on 13 April 2010, a rail maintenance worker was fatally injured when struck by a passenger train at Kogarah in Sydney's southern suburbs. The method of protection being applied was Controlled Signal Blocking (CSB).

This incident is under investigation. The hazards of working in the rail corridor are well understood and the network rules exist to control risk. Accordingly the Independent Transport Safety and Reliability Regulator (ITSRR) is issuing this notice to remind all railway operators that the Signaller and the Protection Officer **must** share communication to confirm that the correct signal(s) have been placed to stop with blocking facilities applied *and* that there is no rail traffic between the protecting signal(s) and the worksite.

The term 'Signaller' covers all job titles which may be performing the duties of Signaller for the location, for example, Area Controller and Network Controller.

The rule requirement

Network Procedures NPR703¹ and ANPR703 direct that the Protection Officer must:

Before work begins, confirm with the Signaller that:

- signals have been set at STOP and blocking facilities applied, and
- there is no rail traffic in the area between the controlled signals being used for protection and the workers.

This requirement reflects principles laid down in the actual Rules NWT308 and ANWT308.

¹ Current version represented by Safe Notice 2010-026



The Rules and Procedures make it clear that while the Signaller has the initial responsibility for these actions, the Protection Officer has a separate responsibility to “confirm” with the Signaller that the actions have in fact been taken.

This responsibility requires specific and explicit action by the Protection Officer. The Protection Officer must ask for and receive *explicit* confirmation of the required actions having been taken in *both* the categories shown as dot points above.

Action

Accredited operators and rail infrastructure managers should ensure that all personnel who might apply CSB are aware of, understand, and apply these requirements.

In particular, Signallers should be informed that they must take initial responsibility for placing the required signal(s) at stop with blocking facilities applied *and* for checking that there is no rail traffic between the signal(s) and the worksite, *but the process under the Rules and Procedures is not complete until the Protection Officer has obtained specific confirmation of both these aspects*. Similarly, Protection Officers must understand that they must obtain specific confirmation of both these aspects, *and must not allow work to take place until confirmation has been received*.

Len Neist
Chief Executive