

FrontlineMatters

For workers in transport

Issue 25 September 2024

Why listening matters

Page 10

CIRAS reports
Insights
Features
...and more

CIRAS
Confidential Safety Hotline

Report hotline (UK): 0800 4 101 101
Report hotline (ROI): 1800 239 239
Freepost CIRAS
CIRAS reporting app

www.ciras.org.uk

((CIRAS reporting app))

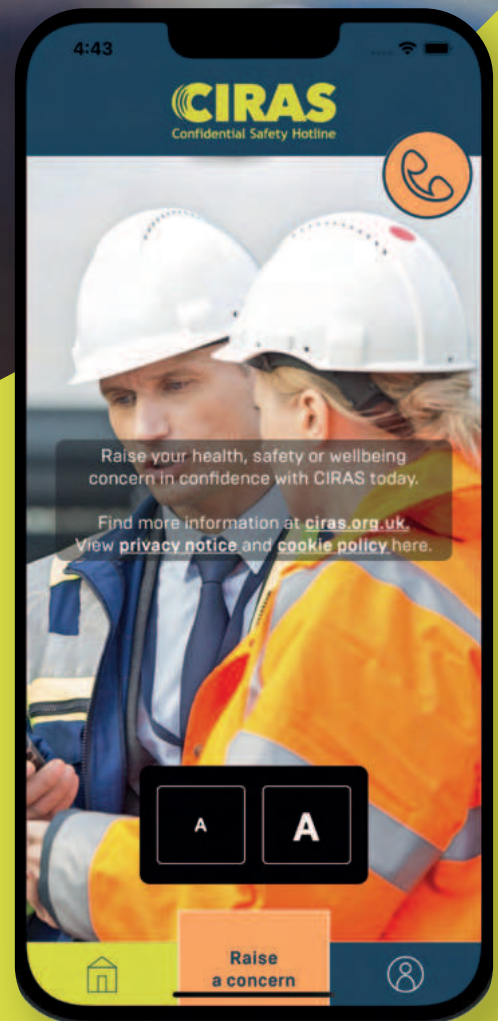
Got a health or safety concern?

Report it in confidence, on the go.

CIRAS is the confidential safety hotline for transport. Download the CIRAS reporting app on Google Play or the App Store to raise your health, safety and wellbeing concerns. We protect your identity and share your concern with the right people, so they can act.



Scan me



Editor's note

Welcome to Frontline Matters.

There are 15 CIRAS case studies for you in this issue, including our special feature on concerns raised with us related to the bus sector. Find out on page 13 what happened afterwards.

Wherever you work in transport and construction, you can raise your concerns with us in confidence, protecting your identity. On page 4, learn how we keep your concerns confidential. We also share some advice on how you can ensure they stay confidential.

We know you value the service from your feedback and comments, and you can see some of these on page 14.

From page 8, dive into the data behind CIRAS reports from 2023 to 2024. You'll see what sort of concerns reporters had, what job roles were reporting to us the most, what reporters believed the root cause of concerns to be, and more.

Desk-worker? Driver? There are many job roles where we don't move our bodies much during the day. For others, moving

around is something we do all day, every day. Whether we're not moving enough, or doing a lot of heavy lifting, both can affect our musculoskeletal health. Take a couple of minutes to fill out the survey we share on page 6.

It's important to speak up when something isn't right, but listening is also crucial. Find out more about good listening and why it matters on page 10.

Stay safe and well.

The CIRAS team

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If you have a query or would like to change your Frontline Matters newsletter order, please contact:
editor@ciras.org.uk

Read our privacy notice at:

<https://www.ciras.org.uk/privacy-notice/>

CIRAS reporting app:





Keeping your concerns confidential

CIRAS is a confidential safety hotline, but what does this mean?

Confidential means when you report your concerns to us, only our three-person reporting team knows who you are.

This is the team you'll speak with on the phone. They'll never reveal your identity. They'll never reveal the identity of anyone else involved in the concern either.

“ **After your report is closed, we destroy any identifying details we hold.**

Putting it simply, being confidential just means we

protect your identity. That's at the heart of what we do, so you feel safe to speak up.

“ **It's not just keeping your name and company secret.**

We listen to your safety concerns. If we can't take them forward—for example, if we couldn't guarantee confidentiality, or if the issue needs to be dealt with immediately—then we make sure you know where else you can report them.

It's not just about keeping your name and company secret. We also never include job titles, and we only mention locations if enough people work there, so it's not possible to know that the report came from you.

Confidential, not anonymous

We're not an anonymous reporting service. That's because we ask for your details so we can stay in touch throughout the process.

We contact you to understand fully your concern and to send you the response, and so you can give feedback. After your report is closed, we destroy any identifying details we hold.

Ways to help keep your concern confidential

Following these tips will help everyone else who uses CIRAS too.

1. Don't tell anyone you've used us!
2. If you've reported elsewhere before, let us know. We ask how you said things in that report so that we say it differently.
3. Want to include photos or videos? Try not to be seen if taking a photo or video, and always stay in a place of safety. Also, make sure no one is visible in the shot. Once you've sent us your photos or videos, it's sensible to delete them from your phone or whichever device you used to take them.



Did you know?

Sometimes we forward images you've sent us to the company your concern is for. When we do this, we send screenshots—not originals—and we name the files so that the company can't trace them.

Early train dispatch



Dispatch staff at Leeds railway station are giving the ‘station duties complete’ tip (typically a baton and a whistle) too early. The reporter explains that, to their knowledge, the tip should be 30-40 seconds before departure. But in recent months, dispatch staff have given it 50 seconds before departure.

Stations managed by different train operating companies can have different procedures and timings.

The reporter isn’t aware of any changes to the timings at Leeds station, though, and they’re concerned that the early start to the dispatch process creates panic among

passengers. Someone could trip and fall while running to board if they think the train is about to depart.

It could also result in a train guard mistakenly closing the doors early and giving the signal to the driver to leave while passengers are still trying to board. This could lead to a platform/train interface incident.

Northern confirmed that its procedure for dispatch hasn’t changed recently, and that the first tip should be 30 seconds before departure. It rebriefed its dispatch team on the procedure.

View the report:

<https://www.ciras.org.uk/report-04784>

Driver incident support

Operational incident manager (OIM) is a new role at Three Bridges Rail Operating Centre. A reporter said OIMs aren’t going on the rail network to offer drivers support in an operational incident. Instead, they provide support over the phone. This isn’t enough.

It isn’t clear how OIMs assess the support to give drivers, such as whether to attend incidents in person. Have there been changes to this?

GTR Southern said a 2023 reorganisation separated operational incident response from business-as-usual competence management. The competency development manager (CDM) was responsible for both. Incident response now sits with OIMs.

Expectations haven’t changed, and there’s the same amount

of on-call cover. OIMs try to speak with drivers face-to-face after an incident, but it can be difficult in practice.

OIMs take risk-based decisions about whether to attend, call the driver, or mobilise other support, such as a local CDM or line manager. They consider the location or nature of the incident, the driver’s mental state and incident record, and whether there are other live incidents or operational factors.

If the OIM doesn’t attend, they must complete a form and justify this decision for review. GTR Southern encourages anyone concerned about a specific incident to raise it with their line manager.

GTR Southern reviewed the whole Southern Operational Training and Competency team after the CIRAS report. As a



result, it’s communicating about the reorganisation—including the OIM role—through roadshows. It will also explore whether CDM teams can support reaction to incidents when they need a quick response.

View the report:

<https://www.ciras.org.uk/report-04697>

Help make the industry healthier



Many rail workers experience aches, pain or discomfort at work.

We want to understand if this is happening to you and why so we can help make work a healthier place for you.

Share your experience in our short online survey by 30 September 2024.



URL: <https://nam.dcv.ms/js0mTCHM6w>



This survey has been supported by:



Secondhand vape aerosol

LNER staff vaping on trains were exposing colleagues to secondhand vape aerosol.

This was mostly on the London King's Cross to Inverness route. The vape aerosol could damage the health of those nearby.

Staff were vaping in confined areas, such as the on-board café, or the staff area. Passengers don't vape on trains.

In response, LNER briefed staff, sharing its smoking and vaping policy. Staff can only smoke or vape in designated areas of stations. Ignoring this could lead to disciplinary action. Staff can report breaches using its close-call app, with an option to report confidentially, or its whistleblowing policy.

View the report:

<https://www.ciras.org.uk/report-04643>



Inconsistent safety briefings

Important information isn't briefed consistently within Signalling and Telecommunications (S&T) in Wales, said a reporter.

Technical safety briefings have on occasion been deprioritised for performance-related and other briefings. This interrupts the sharing of information.

It is still shared through information packs, but the reporter believes briefings are more effective, as they allow for discussion and the chance to ask questions. Without them, people could miss crucial shared learning or updates.

Network Rail said every effort is made to ensure the team attends Route Asset Manager (RAM) technical briefings. Updates have been shared through written correspondence in the case of annual leave or unforeseen absence. This is communicated clearly and promptly with the RAM team.

Network Rail mandated briefing attendance to the S&T maintenance engineer, assistant

S&T maintenance engineer, technical support, and section manager/supervisor teams.

The most senior person present will continue to brief anyone absent. All RAM technical briefings will be recorded so cascade briefings are consistent and content isn't lost.

Before the report, Network Rail had reviewed the cascade of information via the technical support team to the frontline. It has an action plan to ensure compliance. This process will be monitored.

The industry needs better, innovative ways to engage with and brief staff, Network Rail added. The RAM technical brief would benefit from a format change to better cascade information to frontline teams. It will work with the RAM team to improve the process. One proposal is a roadshow-style RAM briefing at a central location for all S&T staff.

View the report:

<https://www.ciras.org.uk/report-04527>

Footbridge condition

Petts Wood station footbridge has cracks and holes, rust, and corrosion. This might affect its structural integrity. Poor drainage could be why. Water settles on the metal girders.

The track is visible beneath a hole. A hazard board is covering this. There are no nosings (to increase step visibility) on the crumbling steps to platforms 3 and 4. There could be a risk of slips, trips, or falls.

Despite temporary repairs, the reporter was concerned.

Network Rail arranged for a contractor to survey it.

A detailed survey in February 2020 noted poor condition but no immediate safety concerns.

It then met the contractor to discuss temporary work needed and timescales. The short-term fix was to bolt timber struts through the web of cross beams, and to support the grille and deck above. This was planned for completion in 2024.

The footbridge will still be inspected annually. Immediate risks or defects will be fault-reported via the Operational Property Helpdesk for priority attention.

Complete refurbishment is planned for 2025/26, to include strengthening, repairs, and a repaint. If a replacement is more economically viable, Network Rail will explore this, but surveys don't show this.

View the report:

<https://www.ciras.org.uk/report-04574>

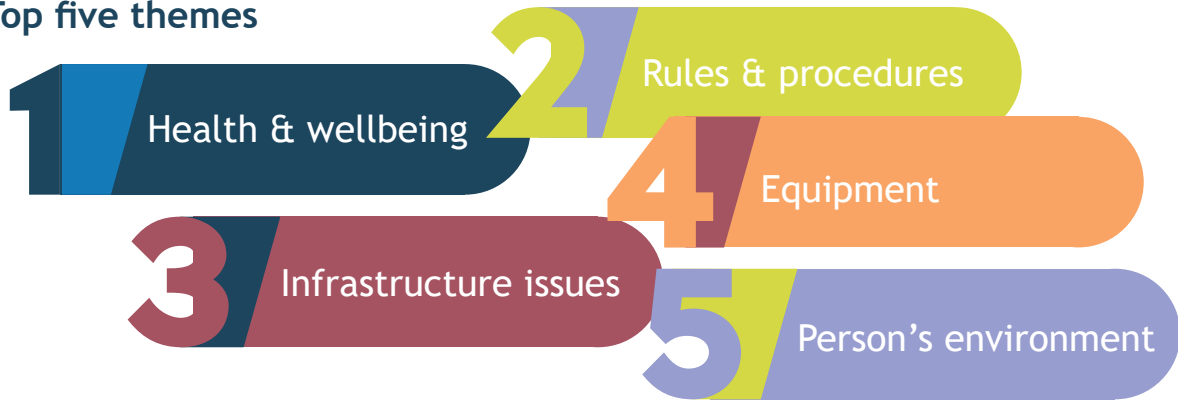



What are people reporting?

Here's what people told us about in 2023/24.

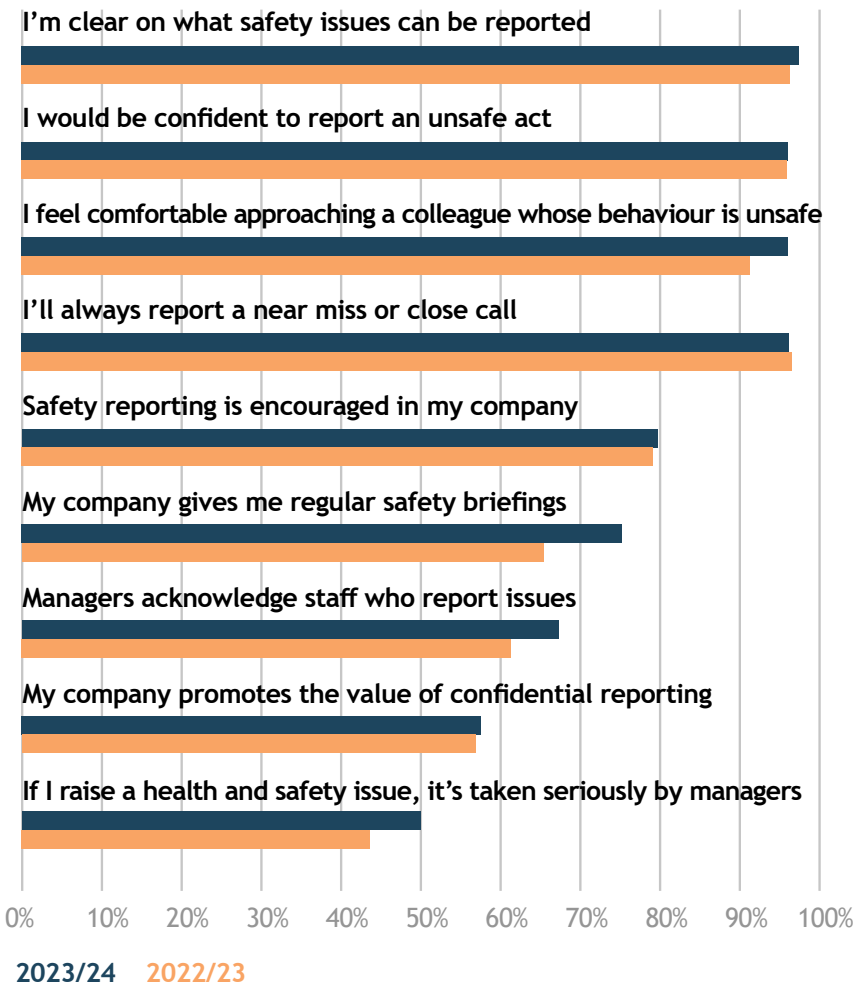
This data is from April 2023 to March 2024. We collect it by asking you questions when we speak to you on the phone about your concern.

Top five themes

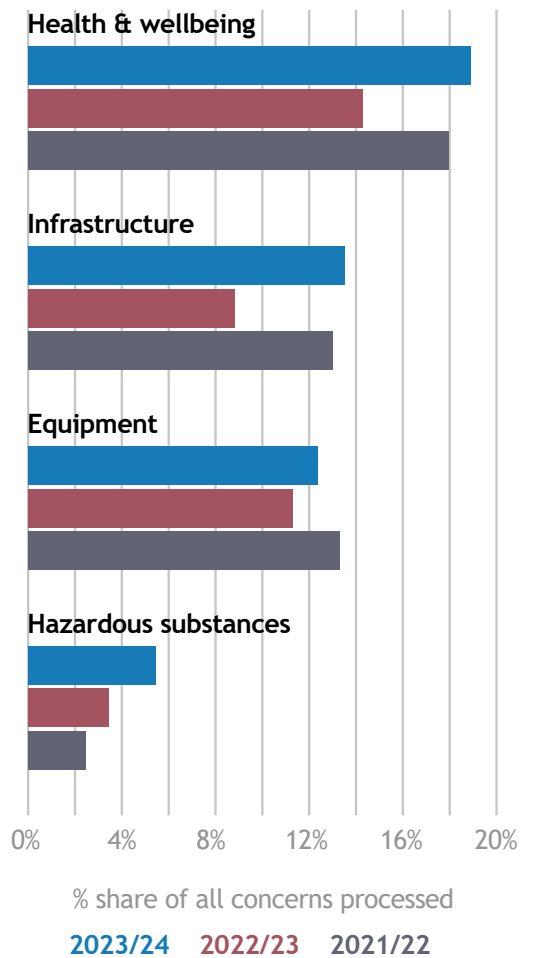



 69% first tried raising their concern through internal channels.

'Yes' responses to safety culture statements

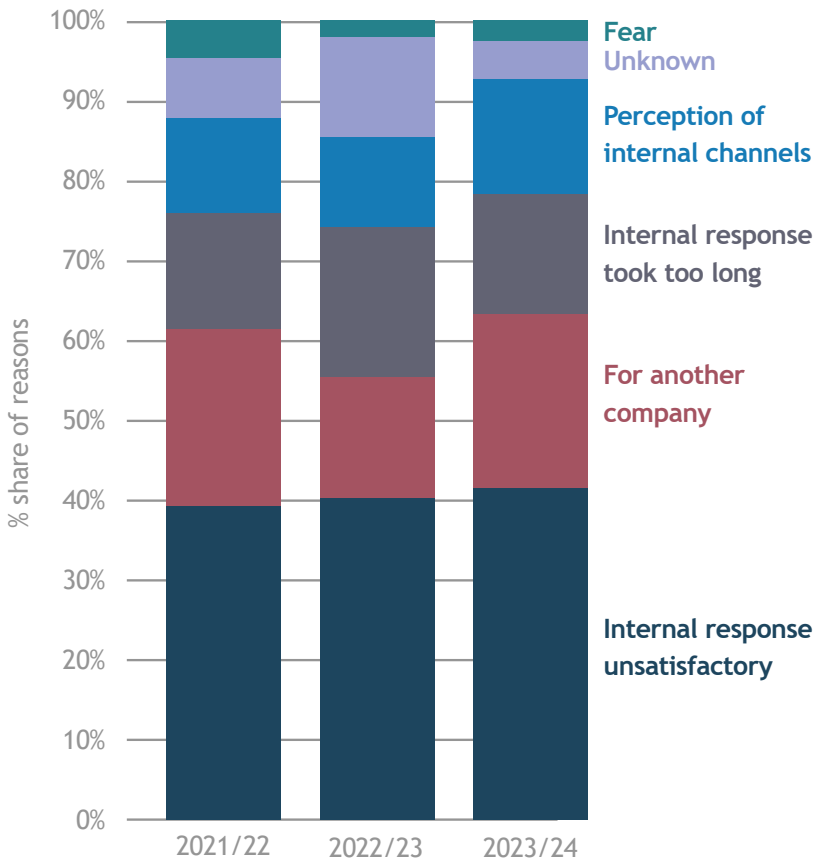


Themes on the rise



 Have you been experiencing any of these issues?

All reasons for coming to CIRAS



48% of concerns could have resulted in personal injuries. 39% could have resulted in a major accident, such as a derailment or road accident.



95% of reporters said they would use CIRAS again.

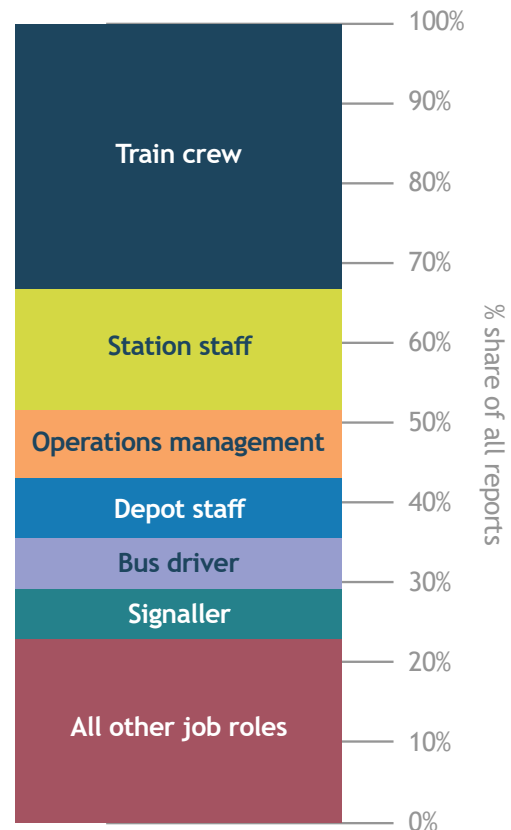


In 2023/24, train crew made up the biggest share of CIRAS reporters. This category includes train drivers and on-board staff such as conductors. We also observed a slight increase in bus drivers reporting their concerns to CIRAS.

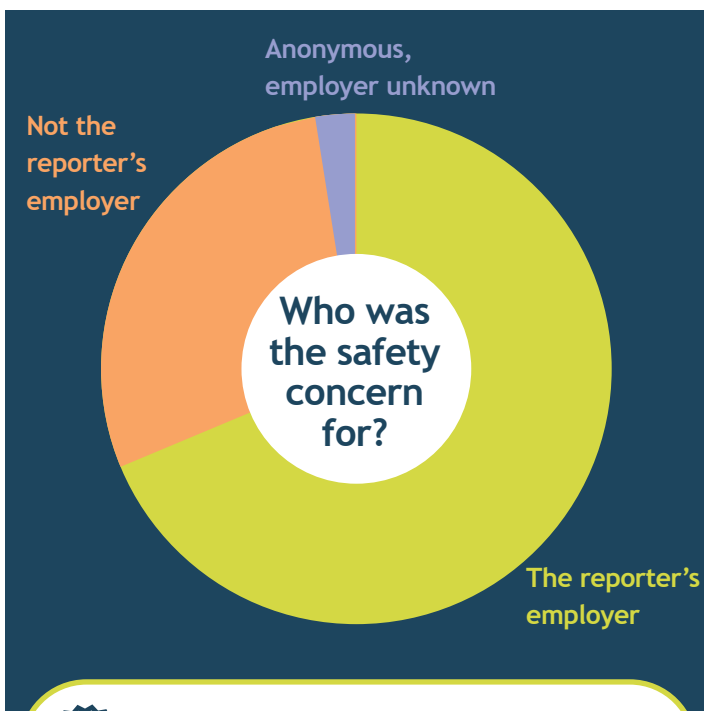


In 2023/24, 73% of reports led to action. 34% of reports led to more than one action.

Who are we hearing from in 2024?



Don't see your job role here? Remember, any member of staff from our member companies can use CIRAS to confidentially report a health, safety, or wellbeing concern.



You can report concerns about any company, even if you don't work for them.



Why listening matters

Speaking up about your concerns is important, but listening leads to action.

How often have you decided to talk about something but changed your mind when you felt you weren't being listened to?

“ The way a listener approaches a conversation or concern impacts how effective it is.

Who's listening and who's speaking affects where a discussion goes and what comes from it. Speaking and listening aren't one-way. They're circular. The way a listener approaches a conversation or concern impacts how effective it is.

Being open to hearing uncomfortable opinions, facts, or perspectives can help uncover what someone raising a concern or issue really wants. Listening defensively, with an end goal in mind before hearing from the other person, can close off the chance of a satisfying conclusion.

When someone doesn't listen, there's no opportunity to learn. And listening doesn't just mean hearing words. It's about listening and looking out for what's not being said, too. This helps with understanding the wider context. What's not being said might even be the real heart of the matter.

People share concerns in many ways. Maybe you're confident and happy to tell your line manager directly. Do you drop hints, hoping that someone gets the message and deals with it? Or do you say nothing and hope someone else raises it instead?

“ People share concerns in many ways.

In any case, are your concerns heard? If not, perhaps you could share them in a different way, by telling someone else or using another reporting channel. Reporting confidentially through CIRAS might help you if you prefer to protect your identity (see page 4).

A company can show they're listening by sharing what they're already doing in relation to the concern and any next steps they're taking. When you use CIRAS, you'll find out what's happened when we send you the company's response. We always make sure you get a response.

“ Reporting confidentially through CIRAS might help you.

If you have something to say, make sure you're heard. Make the right call to tell someone.



Did you know?

Raising concerns helps to build industry knowledge so that people can 'listen' as well as learn in the future by looking back at past reports.

Work site safety

A reporter had concerns about VolkerRail Story Joint Venture (JV) construction work at Dore and Topley railway station.

There were no barriers or debris netting where scaffolding was next to the railway. Loose tubes were stored on the lower levels of scaffolding. Scaffolding track bed supports were loose. The site was also untidy, risking slips, trips, and falls.

VolkerRail and VolkerRail Story JV senior managers and site teams fully investigated. The regional director and senior project manager visited in addition to their normal site inspections. This revealed that housekeeping and material storage weren't up to standard.

A review showed nine close calls about poor storage. Each had been resolved, but after the report and visit, VolkerRail stood down the site for a full tidy and to improve storage. It's investigating the underlying causes. Sites will be reviewed as part of the command-and-



control process prior to work, and there will be further assurance activities.

The scaffolding's temporary works design included toe boards and brick guards (mesh fencing) on the working platforms to mitigate the risk of falling debris. Records confirm there were weekly inspections. These also found no issues with the track bed support.

The civils construction responsible engineer didn't consider debris netting necessary. It's used when there are working platforms at various levels of scaffolding, or if work

generates a lot of dust—neither were the case. VolkerRail learned the decision wasn't recorded as required to ensure changes are properly assessed and authorised, so it's ensuring this process is captured.

The scaffolding was removed in line with the programme. There was no evidence—photos, close calls, or inspections—of loose tubes stored on lower levels, but VolkerRail communicated safe working practices for scaffolding across the business.

View the report:

<https://www.ciras.org.uk/report-04711>

Image: Dore and Topley railway station © M. J Richardson / Wikimedia Commons

Unsanitary toilets

Toilets at the route 27 bus stand on Malden Crescent, Chalk Farm, are in poor condition, said a reporter.

The men's toilet is blocked, creating a bad smell. There's nowhere to wash hands. There's a tap, but no running water, and no hand sanitiser either.

The women's toilet is always locked, so women have no access to toilet facilities.

Transport for London (TfL) doesn't own or maintain these toilets, but there had been an arrangement for TfL contractors

to clean and maintain the facilities. This has lapsed, and TfL had not been instructed for some time. There was an agreement for TfL to provide cleaning only and to recover costs from the owner. The owner retained responsibility for all other activities.

To resolve the issue raised, TfL arranged for a contractor to clean the toilets and passed the charges to the owner. The owner's supplier attended the site to clear the blockages.

TfL has contacted the owner to request that the facilities are



regularly cleaned, maintained, and available, advising they're the owner's responsibility.

View the report:

<https://www.ciras.org.uk/report-04732>



Rail Wellbeing Live: save the dates

The online health and wellbeing festival for rail workers is back.

Rail Wellbeing Live is on 5-7 November this year and will be as big as ever.

Headliners are explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes, Olympian Dame Kelly Holmes, football manager and former player Stuart Pearce MBE, and author, presenter, and campaigner Katie Piper OBE.

Choose from 40 inspirational sessions. Highlights include:

- MasterChef's Amar Latif ('Being limitless')
- Robert Hobson ('Ultra-processed food')
- Dr Supriya McKenna ('The narcissist next door')
- Dr Hannah Critchlow ('The power of collective thinking')

- Dr Sophie Mort ('A manual for being human')
- Joshua Fletcher ('Untangle your anxiety')
- Prof Sam Wass ('How the modern world is changing children')
- Dr Gemma Newman ('Get well, stay well')
- Alex Holmes ('Time to talk: how men think about mental health')

The opening session will focus on mental wellbeing in challenging times.

Evening sessions taking place on 6 November will focus on footcare for the rail industry and the mental health toll of being on the road. This will be hosted by former Boo Radleys

lead singer and guitarist Dr Simon Rowbottom.

New for this year: peer-to-peer sessions. Help each other learn skills, including how to support a colleague through grief, how to be an empathetic listener, and how to spot if a colleague's struggling with mental health.

The Wellbeing Hero Award is back too. This is your chance to nominate a colleague! The winner will be announced on 5 November.

Register, and you'll also be able to play everything back for two weeks after the event.

Anyone in rail can register at rwl24.co.uk from early September. If you register and attend, you could win a £200 Decathlon voucher in a draw.

New Right Track issue

If you work in rail and don't already read *Right Track*, now is a great time to start.

Right Track is the Rail Safety and Standards Board's frontline safety magazine. The new

issue is out this month, with articles about overspeeding, diversity, non-technical skills development, depot safety, and learning from past incidents.

Go to: rssb.co.uk/right-track.



8 bus concerns

Here's what happened after CIRAS reports.

1. Slips and trips

Staff could have broken an ankle in broken drainage grates at a depot. Some had been injured. Inductions warned about it. There were also holes in concrete around grates. Heavy traffic made it worse. The company replaced internal drains with a drainpipe below ground and a level walkway. It replaced external failed drain covers and concrete and planned to replace other covers before they failed.

4. Distracting light

A faulty light above doors flickered and distracted drivers. It might trigger a seizure in passengers with epilepsy. The company checked for loose connections and found an insecure microswitch. They made it secure and checked microswitches on vehicles of the same type.

6. Bus capacity

Company policy was for unlimited buggies to be able to board a bus, if not in the aisle. It would take significant time to evacuate them in an emergency. When busy, there was less space for buggies to alight. There had been passenger altercations. The company put a revised sign on its buses that two buggies was the maximum, with further detail.

8. Hot cabs

The air-cooling system in buses often blew hot. This could cause fatigue and heat exhaustion. Systems met the specification, but couldn't lower the temperature enough in extreme heat. The company fitted fans in driver cabs, and was working with contractors to identify inefficient systems before hot weather. In the longer term, a contractor was working across bus operators on how to retrofit climate adaptation improvements involving the temperature dropping further and in less time.

2. Seat comfort

Drivers couldn't adjust their seat forward and down. It angled into the backs of their knees. This was distracting and could have led to an accident. The company fitted a tilting seat cradle.

3. Rainwater leak

Rain in the cab could have got into drivers' eyes and made the steering wheel slippery, causing an accident. The company would check each affected vehicle and the fleet during maintenance. Inspections would check window and panel sealing. In the short term, an absorbent would soak up fluid. The company would remove and reseal affected windows, panels if needed, and fill holes from wear-and-tear.

5. Messroom hygiene

Full bin bags were left in the messroom. There were rats. Running water wasn't drinkable, and there was no fridge to store bottled water. The company provided a fridge and reviewed cleaning standards with contractors. Bags would be removed when bins were changed, and vermin issues addressed. The cabin was replaced with a new, suitable site.

7. Broken demister

Demisters were only blowing cold air. This couldn't stop a windscreen fogging up. A new demister matrix had been fitted before the report. After it, an inspection found it blew warm air. But the company then also fitted a booster pump to increase air flow and circulation.

What you've told us

Your feedback about raising your concerns through CIRAS.

'CIRAS staff are helpful, listen and are supportive in the understanding many people are afraid of reporting.'

'It was great to be listened to and be understood. All CIRAS colleagues were professional, friendly, and attentive. Thank you.'

'[I] received a prompt, positive response from the company. I'm satisfied with the proposal to fix the issue.'

'I'm appreciative that CIRAS got me a response. That's not something I've been able to get internally.'

'I am always happy with using CIRAS, as I know I'll get a response.'

'Very good, easy to talk to. Answered all the questions, spent a lot of time going through everything. Report to company very good, and [I] would use CIRAS again without any hesitation.'

'There's definitely been [an] impact, and that's why I've used CIRAS before and will use you again.'

'My experience of using CIRAS was excellent, and I am grateful for the conclusion [that] has been reached.'

Do you have any concerns about health, wellbeing or safety?

Have you tried internal reporting channels, or don't feel that you can?

Let us know your concern by sending this FREEPOST form. Or for a faster response contact us via our freephone, app or webform.

Any information you provide will be treated as confidential.

We ask you to provide your name and contact details so we can get in touch to discuss your concerns. Once your report is processed, your report form will be destroyed.

Name:

Job title:

Employer:

Phone:

Mobile:

Describe your concern:

Convenient time to call:

What happens next?

- We will contact you to discuss your health and safety concerns
- We will write a report on your behalf
- We remove any information that might identify you
- We send the report to the company for a response
- Once we receive the response we will then provide you with a copy

Fill out the form, cut along the line and seal.



CONFIDENTIAL

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Fold along the dotted line and seal edges



Confidential Safety Hotline

**If you have a safety concern,
make the right call and report it.**

Tell your supervisor, or contact us in
complete confidence.

Call 0800 4 101 101 or download our
CIRAS reporting app.



Scan me



We find safety in listening.