

Health in rail

ORR's latest report shows that better health is happening in rail. Good progress with important improvements and a step change in awareness. But much more to do to sustain momentum and make lasting changes.

What are the challenges?



Work-related ill health in rail at similar level to construction, one of the highest risk industries



Sickness absence rate rail (3.9%) vs private sector (1.8%)



Rail workers have higher rates of work-related respiratory diseases than the wider working population



New cases of work-related ill health cost the industry £2.5-5 million a year, excluding conditions such as cancer



Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) and mental health dominate with hand arm vibration (HAVS) an issue for Network Rail



ORR's surveys suggest health claims cost rail employers at least £3 million a year

What are our findings?



Significant gap between corporate intention and reality on the ground



Significant gap between industry reporting publicly on health (22%) compared to safety (40%)



Health management not as good as management of safety - we had to enforce on basic improvements



Still incomplete and inconsistent health data



Good health management in places, but not as good as other industries

What positive changes have we seen?



More evidence of innovation and sharing good practice on health



Mainline industry data shows encouraging downward trends in manual handling incidents



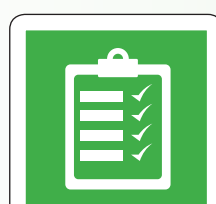
Industry reporting of occupational diseases improved significantly, but some under-reporting may persist



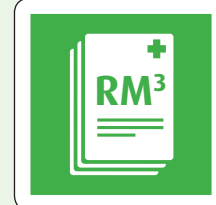
Improved leadership and collaboration delivered the Industry Roadmap for health

What are the next steps?

Rail companies and their contractors need to:



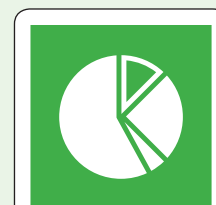
Act on key health risks - HAVS, MSDs, mental health, respiratory disease and exposure to asbestos, silica, and diesel fumes



Make more use of RM3 (our maturity model) for health



Comply with the law through effective monitoring



Make better use of meaningful health data to focus on the right priorities



Build the competence of managers and supervisors on health risk management



Close the gap between public reporting on health compared with safety



Report new and worsening diagnoses of occupational disease, in particular HAVS by rail contractors

ORR's 2014-19 programme sets out how we and the industry can make better health happen in rail

