



ORR occupational health programme update

January 2017

Introduction

This quarterly brief updates you on progress with some of the work under [ORR's Occupational Health programme 2014-19](#), to inform discussions on health with ORR inspectors. We have identified key messages for rail duty holders and would welcome [feedback](#). You can now subscribe to occupational health [news](#).

This issue focuses on:

- Work-related cancer and the rail industry
- Fatigue in the rail industry – Are your employees fit for work?
- The Annual Railway Health and Wellbeing Conference 2016

1. Work-related cancer and the rail industry

A new report by HSE "[Costs to Britain of Work-Related Cancer](#)" estimates in monetary terms, the total economic burden of new cases of work-related cancer. It estimates that new occupational cancers cost society £12.3 billion per year (figures based on new cases of work-related cancer in Great Britain in 2010 arising from past working conditions). Individuals bear the vast majority of the cost to society with £11.4 billion being attributed to human costs. By comparison, employers bear a much smaller share of the overall costs, at £461 million. Lung cancer accounts for £6.8 billion alone.

Costs are estimated for the 24 work-related cancer types identified in the [HSE Cancer Burden Study](#), which was published in 2010, based on both the known and the probable carcinogens classified by the International Agency for Research on Cancer. For the rail industry we recognise the potential for exposures to several of the main causes of

occupational cancer, particularly asbestos, silica and diesel engine fumes. This will be reflected in our strategic priorities, inspection work and engagement with the industry.

The rail industry has continued to improve its management of these risks and is more aware than ever of its need to ensure employees are protected. However, this does not mean the industry can be complacent and employers should continue to assess and minimise the risks from exposure to known or suspect carcinogens.

In the April 2016 edition of this brief, we covered IOSH's ['No Time To Lose'](#) campaign which covered the management of silica dust which is the second biggest cause of occupational cancers in Britain. In December, ORR, Network Rail and Crossrail signed up to a [new cross-industry commitment](#) to tackle the risks of exposure to respirable crystalline silica led by IOSH's No Time to Lose campaign team. The agreed plan of action will pool knowledge and resources to achieve three objectives:

1. To work together to reduce exposure to RCS through effective monitoring and management of dust;
2. To increase awareness and understanding of the potential health risks associated with exposure to RCS in order to change attitudes and behaviours;
3. To share good practice on the management of RCS across industry sectors.

Key messages:

- Employers, how does your health strategy support the monitoring for silica exposure?
- Trade Union Reps, are you able to look at potential for silica dust exposure in your workplace and include these in your risk assessments?

2. Fatigue in the rail industry – Are your employees fit for work?

On the 15th November, RSSB hosted the third Rail Industry Fatigue Forum. The forum was attended by managers and union representatives from across the industry and the key message was the need to manage risks from fatigue using a wide-ranging, risk-based approach.

ORR's publication ['Managing Rail Staff Fatigue'](#) defines fatigue as "a state of perceived weariness that can result from prolonged working, heavy workload, insufficient rest and inadequate sleep". The effects of fatigue can result in employees not only being a danger to themselves but also to colleagues and members of the public. They are also less efficient and prolonged spells of fatigue can lead to them being more susceptible to illnesses resulting in increased absenteeism. It is therefore in an employer's interest to ensure their employees are fit for work.

Working patterns can cause fatigue if not properly managed. Chapter 5 of the 'Managing Rail Staff Fatigue' guidance document sets out the fatigue risk management systems (FRMS) which identify and draw together all the preventive and protective measures which help an organisation control risks from fatigue. Shift patterns, breaks and rest periods need to be managed effectively. CIRAS have produced a [fatigue video](#) which covers these areas.

It must also be remembered that fatigue affects people differently according to a number of factors including their age, lifestyle, diet, medical conditions etc. Are you aware of any factors that could affect your employees, such as a change in their family circumstances or domestic responsibilities? Have you noticed a change in their behaviour, do they seem irritable?

Key Messages:

- How do you know if someone is fatigued? It can be hard to detect fatigue in an employee, especially at the start of a shift as they may look fine but the fatigue could affect them as their shift progresses. While managers have a responsibility to ensure their staff are fit to carry out the tasks set for them, it is also the employees responsibility to inform their manager if they are feeling fatigued. Employees should be encouraged to speak to their managers and / or supervisors if they feel they are not fit for work.
- Driving to and from work can also contribute to fatigue risk. Has your employee had to drive a long distance to arrive at site? Has this affected their ability to concentrate on the task they are undertaking? Do they have to drive home or can they be found overnight accommodation to allow them to rest properly? RSSB have a suite of guidance documents on the Road Risk page of their website which covers guidance from HSE, RoSPA and ETSC as well as railway industry guidance which can help with the management of road risk issues, raise awareness and support safety management systems. The RSSB's 'Driving down the risk' explains the work of the Road Driving Risk Steering Group and how organisations can get involved with moving the road risk agenda forward.
- How do your arrangements align with the 'Managing Rail Staff Fatigue' guidance?

3. The Annual Railway Health and Wellbeing Conference 2016

The Annual Railway Health and Wellbeing Conference was held on the 22nd November 2016. This year's theme was how all parties can work together to provide effective health management within rail.

Presenters covered: the importance of engagement and commitment; a strategy requiring leadership to get delivery; getting value for money; and how the impact of initiatives can be measured to ensure the right things are being taken forward. One message that came out of the day was that while the UK rail industry is now Europe's safest, it still has some way to go with regard to health and wellbeing. This cannot be achieved by management alone but requires input from all, from HR and employee representatives to managers and employees. With strong leadership and engagement across organisations, the rail industry can equal its record on safety.

[Time to Change](#) promotes the need for open discussion of mental health and the response to be proportional fair and equitable was of interest to many in the audience.

There were four workshops covering the gap and co-ordination between external health service provision and HR/managers and how to make for a better outcome for employees; a PTSD case study; the data-driven evidence led session that focused on the new SMIS+ opportunities for health; and good practice ideas/sources of information, pledges and campaigns.

Key messages:

- [‘Good health is good for business’](#), Claire Dickinson’s blog on the day and the video [‘Occupational Health: It’s everybody’s business’](#) are on the ORR website and presentations for the day can be found on RSSB’s website (<https://www.rssb.co.uk/library/about-rssb/annual-railway-health-and-wellbeing-conference-post-event.pdf>).



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