



ORR occupational health programme update

May 2018

Introduction

This quarterly brief updates you on progress with some of the work being developed 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:

- Complying with the new law on ionising radiation;
- Asbestos – IOSH No Time to Lose (NTTL) campaign launch;
- Support for action on mental health.

1. Complying with the new law on ionising radiation

Every company that supplies, operates or maintains older rolling stock fitted with Automatic Warning System (AWS) alarm and indicator units painted with tritium-based material need to comply with the requirements of the revised Ionising Radiations Regulations 2017 (IRR17) which came into force on 1 January 2018.

Further guidance, including how to register with the HSE, is available on the [HSE website](#). These Regulations apply to train (TOCs) and freight operating companies (FOCs), heritage operators, rolling stock companies, train maintainers, distributors and repair service suppliers of older (pre-2008) rolling stock with AWS alarm and indicators (AWS units) painted with tritium-based paint. HSE has published guidance and an [Approved Code of Practice](#) on the Regulations.

RSSB has issued [detailed advice and supporting resources](#) to its members and engaged with the wider industry on the requirement to register with the HSE if they work, or are likely to come into contact with, these older AWS units, and to put in place the necessary risk control arrangements. These units remain safe in normal use but may present a risk when damaged or opened for repair. RSSB is supporting

train operators and others to manage the risk by producing template risk assessments, contingency plans in the event of breakage, guidance on training, and procedures for safe storage, transport and disposal.

RSSB advises relevant employers to register with HSE even if they do not currently work with the at-risk AWS units in case they inadvertently lease, maintain, repair, transport or recover a vehicle containing an at-risk AWS unit.

Key messages:

- HSE has indicated that it has received 20 registrations under the IRR 2017 from rail employers. We expected many more from TOCs, FOCs, yellow plant operators, rolling stock maintenance companies, and charter and heritage operators using older rolling stock fitted with AWS alarm and indicator units painted with tritium-based paint. Does this apply to you? Have you registered with the HSE? If not, you need to do so straight away.
- Have you considered potential health risks from other sources of ionising radiations in your risk assessment? Have you, for example, considered exposure to natural radon gas in underground and poorly ventilated tunnels and ground floor rooms in higher risk locations? Rail employers can use the radon dataset at ukradon.org to check whether their premises are in [radon Affected Areas](#), and to inform any subsequent risk assessment. ORR has published a [helpful case study](#) on how Northern Rail reviewed radon levels across its properties and responded proactively to reduce exposures at one of its stations. Further guidance on risk assessment, testing for radon, and practical controls is on [HSE's web site](#).

2. Asbestos – IOSH No Time to Lose (NTTL) campaign launch

HSE estimates that at least 5,000 people die every year in Britain from an asbestos-related cancer caused by exposure at work to asbestos fibres. Earlier this month IOSH launched the latest phase of its occupational cancer campaign to focus attention and action on asbestos; read more [here](#).

Despite the UK ban on asbestos in 1999, asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) can still be found in premises built before then in products such as roofing, spray coatings, lagging, insulating boards, ropes, yarns and cloth, making it essential that workers know how to recognise it and how to protect themselves from accidental

exposure. Concern focuses on when the ACMs become damaged and liable to releasing small asbestos fibres.

An [IOSH survey of 500 construction workers](#) supports the case for raising awareness and better worker training. The survey found that while the majority of construction workers knew about the risks from asbestos, a third of respondents have never checked the asbestos register before starting work on a new site – with nearly half of those not even aware that there is a register. Almost one in five respondents said if they discovered asbestos, they would not be clear about what to do.

Good quality NTTL asbestos campaign resources, including pocket cards, posters and factsheets are available now both online and in a free pack via the [NTTL website](#). These are helpful for both employers and trade unions to refresh and reinforce awareness among rail industry workers on how to protect themselves from accidental exposure to asbestos dust, particularly in property maintenance and refurbishment jobs.

Key messages:

- Can you show leadership by [pledging your support](#) to the NTTL campaign and make a public commitment to review your asbestos prevention strategy? Do you include protective measures for occupational cancer risks, including asbestos, in your annual report or other public reporting?
- Do your operational managers understand the potential risks associated with disturbance of ACMs during property and infrastructure maintenance, and manage them proactively? Do you know the type, location and condition of any asbestos containing materials (ACMs) across your infrastructure (this should be in the ‘asbestos register’)?
- Does your asbestos management plan make clear how intact ACMs will be protected from damage during maintenance work, and prioritise the removal or repair of any ACMs in poor condition? Have local managers and workers had adequate training in safe systems of work for any tasks involving ACMs? How do you monitor compliance?
- In support of our commitment to the NTTL 2017 focus on silica, ORR has produced a short video [‘One Man’s story’](#), which provides powerful first hand testimony of the impact that uncontrolled exposure to silica dust can have on worker health. We encourage all those involved in ballast handling and rail construction or property maintenance to make use of this short interview clip to further increase awareness of the importance of minimising exposure to silica dust in rail settings.

3. Support for action on mental health

As awareness on mental health issues continues to grow, statistics on the scale of the challenge make sobering reading. Data from the HSE's Labour Force Survey show that 45% of all the working days lost due to ill health in 2016 were due to work-related stress, depression or anxiety, while a recent survey suggests that half of sickness absence is due to stress. The rail industry recognises poor mental health as a key driver of long-term sickness absence and reduced productivity, and has prioritised it as a key area for action.

On 27 March 2018, RSSB hosted a Mental Health in the Railway workshop to capture views on development of a proposed plan for Mental Health Leadership in the Railway, and consider the scope for industry participation in the This is Me campaign which supports workers to share their personal experience of mental health.

ORR supports the industry's drive to strengthen leadership on mental health, including on work related stress and offers help on its [website](#) , on how to tackle this important challenge. ORR's position paper on work-related stress sets out a three tier approach to managing stress which gives priority to prevention through job design, supported by good practice interventions to help individuals stay well and at work. Free resources on workplace stress including the HSE Management Standards approach for stress are available on HSE's website.

Key messages:

- Does your current approach to managing workplace stress align with the three-tier approach to stress management suggested by ORR? Is the primary focus on prevention, with interventions aimed at building individual resilience and rehabilitation in a supporting role?



- Can you to use the opportunity in Mental Health Awareness Week 14-20 May 2018 to review and refresh what you are currently doing on mental health?

- If you use the HSE's [Management Standards for stress](#) approach, you may be interested in the new automated [Stress Indicator Tool](#) (SIT) licensed by HSL. The SIT aims to help identify the extent to which work related stress is a problem and the likely root causes. It measures the perceptions of your employees towards work related stress via thirty-five questions around six key areas of work that, if not managed properly, can cause workplace stress.

4. Important changes to subscription

Future editions of the industry occupational health newsletter will be published by Rail Safety and Standards Board. To ensure that you receive future health updates please subscribe [here](#). If you have further questions, please contact Darryl.Hopper@RSSB.CO.UK



© Crown copyright 2018

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3.

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at orr.gov.uk

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at orr.gov.uk