



Rail Safety Briefing

August 2026



Monthly Topics

Latest News

- Heat Stress and Summer Working

Important regular reminders

- My Sentinel
- Useful Links
 - Safety Central
 - Southern Shield
 - Railway Rulebook RSSB
- Network Rail Standards
- Fatigue Management
- WorkSafe Procedure
- Safety / Near Miss reporting
- Network Rail Life Saving Rules
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Purpose of this Briefing

During the summer months, working on or near the railway can expose employees to high temperatures, direct sunlight, and physically demanding tasks. Heat stress can develop quickly and affect anyone, regardless of experience or fitness level. The consequences can range from reduced concentration and poor decision-making to serious illness and injury.

Heat-related incidents not only affect individual wellbeing but can also increase the likelihood of accidents, near misses, and errors that put colleagues and railway operations at risk.

Understanding Heat Stress

Heat stress occurs when the body's ability to cool itself is overwhelmed by environmental conditions and physical activity.

Factors that increase the risk include:

- High air temperatures.
- Direct sunlight.
- High humidity.
- Heavy physical work.
- Wearing PPE for long periods.
- Inadequate hydration.
- Fatigue or lack of sleep.
- Certain medications or health conditions.

Recognising the Signs of Heat Exhaustion

Heat exhaustion is a warning that the body is struggling to regulate its temperature.

Signs and symptoms may include:

- Heavy sweating.
- Headache.
- Dizziness or light-headedness.
- Muscle cramps.
- Weakness and fatigue.
- Feeling sick or nauseous.
- Fast pulse.
- Irritability or confusion.



Heat Stroke

Heat stroke is a medical emergency that requires immediate action. Signs and symptoms may include:

- Very high body temperature.
- Hot, dry skin or excessive sweating.
- Confusion or disorientation.
- Slurred speech.
- Loss of coordination.
- Seizures.
- Loss of consciousness.

If heat stroke is suspected, call emergency services immediately and move the person to a cool area while waiting for assistance.

Hydration and Rest Breaks

One of the simplest and most effective ways to reduce heat-related illness is proper hydration.

Good Practice

- ✓ Drink water regularly throughout the shift.
- ✓ Start the day hydrated.
- ✓ Take planned rest breaks in shaded or cool areas.
- ✓ Monitor colleagues for signs of dehydration.
- ✓ Increase fluid intake during physically demanding tasks.

Warning Signs of Dehydration

- Dry mouth.
- Dark coloured urine.
- Headaches.
- Tiredness.
- Reduced concentration.

Remember

If you wait until you feel thirsty, you may already be dehydrated.



Sun Protection and UV Exposure

Sunburn is more than a temporary discomfort. Repeated exposure to UV radiation can increase the risk of skin damage and skin cancer.

Protect Yourself

- Apply high-factor sunscreen before starting work.
- Reapply sunscreen throughout the day.
- Wear suitable long-sleeved clothing where practical.
- Use neck protection and approved headwear.
- Wear UV-protective safety glasses when required.
- Seek shade during breaks whenever possible.

Even on cloudy days, UV radiation can still cause skin damage.

Impact on Concentration and Decision-Making

Heat affects more than physical wellbeing.

As body temperature rises, workers may experience:

- Reduced alertness.
- Slower reaction times.
- Poor judgement.
- Increased likelihood of mistakes.
- Difficulty following instructions.
- Reduced situational awareness.

In a railway environment, where workers must remain vigilant around moving trains, plant, machinery, and electrical equipment, even a brief lapse in concentration can have serious consequences.

Additional Risks When Wearing PPE

PPE is essential for protection, but during hot weather it can also increase the risk of heat stress.

Potential issues include:

- Reduced airflow around the body.
- Increased sweating.
- Faster fatigue.
- Greater fluid loss.
- Discomfort leading to distractions.



What To Do If You Start Feeling Unwell

- Stop work immediately.
- Inform your supervisor or responsible manager.
- Move to a cool or shaded area.
- Drink water.
- Loosen unnecessary clothing or PPE where safe to do so.
- Seek first-aid support if symptoms persist.
- Never try to "push through" symptoms.

Looking after yourself is a safety responsibility, not a sign of weakness.

Look After Your Colleagues

Heat stress can affect a person's judgement, meaning they may not recognise when they are becoming unwell.

Watch for colleagues who:

- Become unusually quiet.
- Appear confused.
- Make repeated mistakes.
- Stop drinking.
- Show signs of dizziness or fatigue.

Safety Message

"The heat is a hazard just like moving trains, electricity, or plant. Recognise the risks, protect yourself, and look out for your work mates. A few minutes spent preventing heat stress could prevent a serious incident."





My Sentinel

Do you know that you can view all of your own Sentinel Competencies and Swipe-in record in real time?

- See the competency expiry dates and assessment due
- look at your medical and Drugs and Alcohol test records
- Receive emails directly from Sentinel
- Search and email Sentinel sponsors directly
- Follow this link to the "my sentinel" portal <https://mysentinel.me/Account/LogOn/?ReturnUrl=/> and set up your own Sentinel profile

Sentinel guidance on swiping people in can be found [here](#)

<https://info.railsentinel.co.uk/resources/sentinel-app-training-videos/>



You **MUST BE** swiped onto the infrastructure for every single shift.

Three simple swipes

to get everyone
home safe every day



Swipe

1

Sentinel

Controller of Site Safety (COSS) swipes in each team member using their Sentinel card (physical or virtual).

- confirms competence for the task
- verifies sufficient rest



Swipe

2

Sentinel

COSS records the safety brief.

Logs the use of competence during the shift.



Swipe

3

Railhub

Person in Charge (PIC) completes the Authority to Work check between Railhub and Sentinel.

- Sentinel = individuals
- Railhub = safe delivery of work



Why swiping matters

A simple card check is not enough. It:

- ✗ does not verify sufficient rest
- ✗ does not log competence

End of shift

COSS must swipe the team out at end of shift so we can monitor sufficient rest.



Scan to watch
Sentinel training videos

Useful Links

Railway Rule book

Add this website address to your browser favourites to ensure that you always have access to the Network Rail Rulebook modules

<https://www.rssb.co.uk/standards/types-of-standards-and-how-they-work/the-rule-book>

Safety Central

Network Rail share updates of recent incidents, accidents and best practice advice online.

Please get into the habit of checking this website for the latest news;

<https://safety.networkrail.co.uk/tools-resources/safety-bulletins/>

Southern Shield

Southern Shield is a collaborative safety forum that consists of Network Rail Southern Capital Delivery and its principal contractors.

On their website they have useful articles and explain the rules of the Southern Shield charter, which are mandatory on some southern sites.

<https://www.southernshield.co.uk/>



1. Introduction

The purpose of this code

This section of the code tells you about getting access to the Network Rail standards and controls which you will need to do before carrying out work on the rail infrastructure

2. Network Rail standards and controls

Network Rail standards and controls are a set of documents we produce to define the way we work. They set out the information we share, the principles we have and the business requirements we work to.

Together, they give us a consistent, safe and coherent set of working practices across the whole company. By having a single external source for this information, we can be sure that contractors and suppliers have access to the most up-to-date standards and controls information. We publish Network Rail standards and controls quarterly. Publication dates are the first Saturday in March, June, September and December. We'll communicate any changes through the Network Rail Standards and Controls Change summary Report.

All our principal contractors:

- Should show that they have systems in place to access our standards and controls and brief their own people on changes

- Should brief their subcontractors on changes or, assure us that the subcontractors are competent to brief themselves.

- Must not distribute our standards and controls outside their organisation.

To aid your briefing process, you may give your subcontractors a copy of the Network Rail Standards and Controls Change Summary Report.

3. Who do I contact for more information

Suppliers, principal contractors can access Network Rail standards and controls and the change summary report by registering for the Network Rail Standards Portal.

To register, please complete and submit the webform. Please [click here](#)

To find out more, please contact the Network Rail Standards & Controls Management Team on STSupplierSupport@networkrail.co.uk



Changes to your shift times and increased fatigue risk

It is important that you notify your consultant as soon as possible if there is a change to your rostered work pattern while working on the Network Rail Infrastructure.

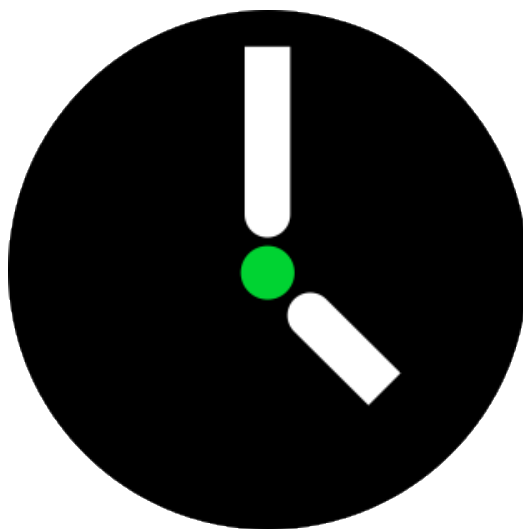
As part of our commitment to you and our obligations to monitor and manage your fatigue, we must always have an accurate understanding of where and when you are working.

In addition, you also have a legal obligation to ensure that you are safe to work, the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. This states that "Workers have a duty to take care of their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work"

Do not start work until you are satisfied that the safety arrangements are appropriate to the activity

Never, ever drive while feeling tired

If you are starting to feel fatigued while you are onsite then instigate the work safe procedure.



Work-safe Procedure

This is for anyone to use; it works as follows:

If you believe the Safety Arrangements to be inadequate:

- Stop Work and talk to the Team Leader or person in charge; they should:
 - Review the arrangements
 - Change them if necessary and re-brief

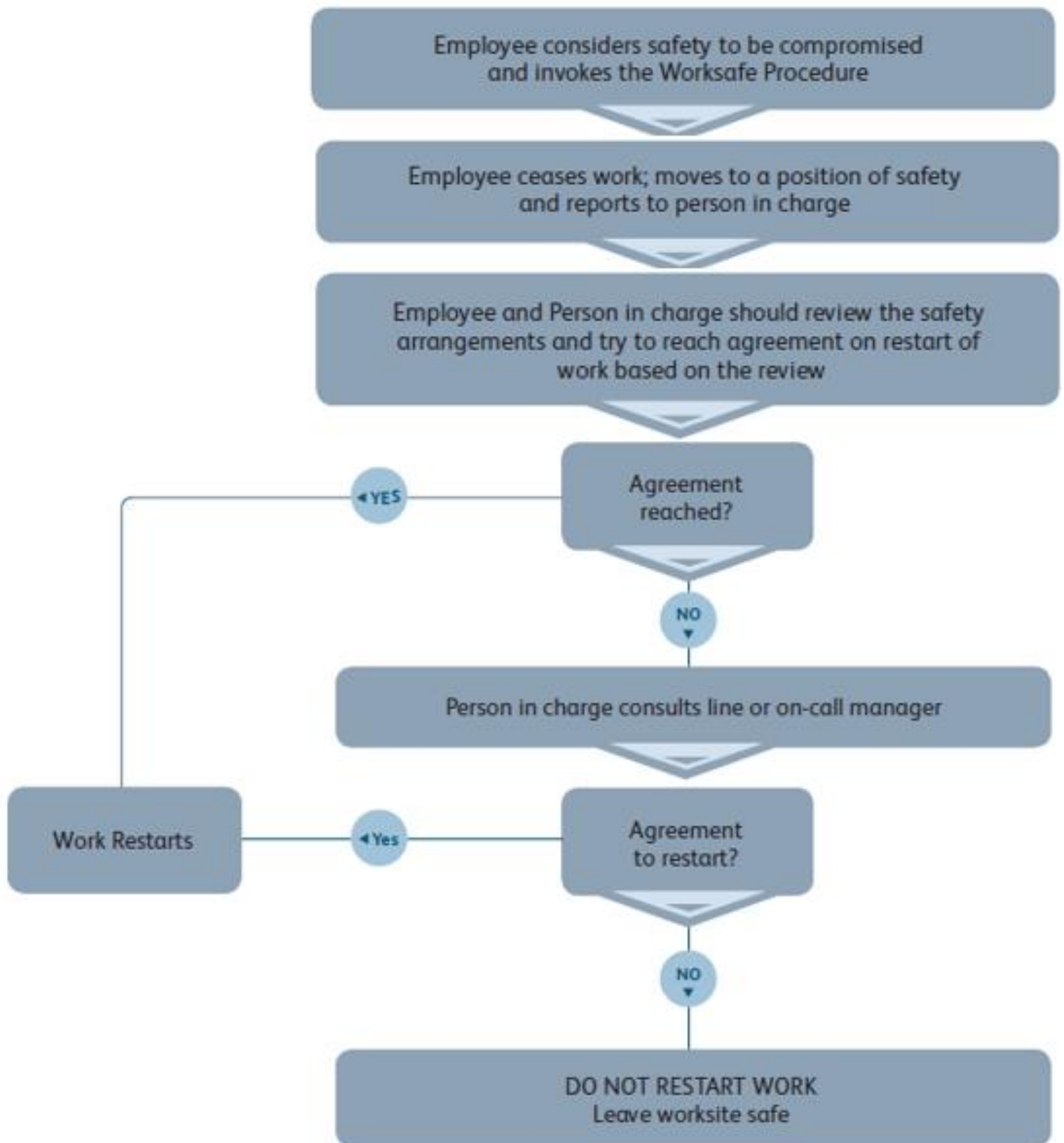
If you are still unhappy **DO NOT RESTART**; escalate to the next level by contacting one of the following:

- The COSS / Supervisor onsite
- Your Line Manager
- Your Safety Rep
- Any member of the management team
- The DU Safety Advisor
- Network Rail Control
- Matchtech on-call 07786 265531

Do not start work until you are satisfied that the safety arrangements are appropriate to the activity



Work-safe Procedure



If you need to report a close call, or register a safety concern then please contact Matchtech via this website;

<https://www.gattacaplc.com/report-near-misses>



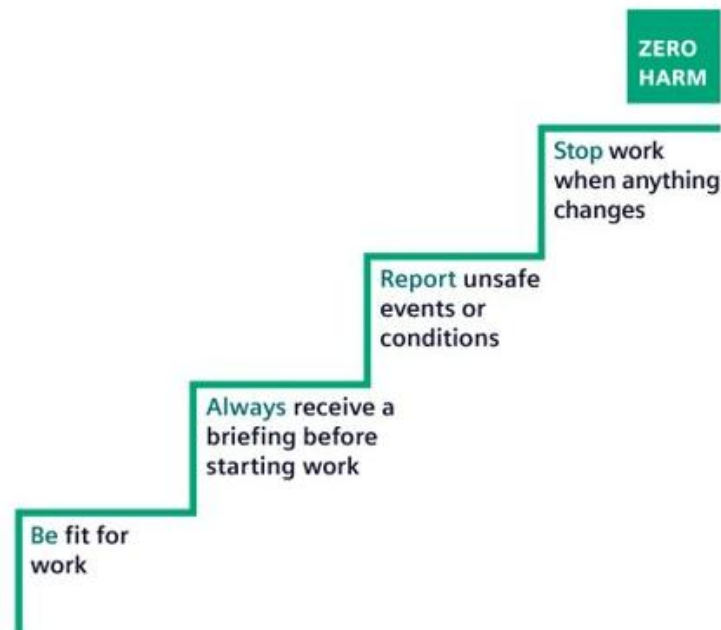
- **Safety sQuaRed**

See it, Scan it, Share it

4 Steps to Zero Harm

Our Priority: Your safety and wellbeing is our absolute priority. We believe that Zero Harm is achievable each and every day by following the four steps and through our behaviours.

Our expectation of everyone, whether an employee / an agency worker or a contractor, is that you will know and live by the 4 Steps.



SIEMENS

A Breach of the Network Rail Life Saving Rules will trigger a Level 1 Investigation into your actions.

Our Lifesaving Rules



Always be sure the required plans and permits are in place, before you start a job or go on or near the line.



Never use a hand-held or hands-free phone, or programme any other mobile device, while driving.



Always use equipment that is fit for its intended purpose.



Always test before applying earths or straps.



Never undertake any job unless you have been trained and assessed as competent.



Never assume equipment is isolated – always test before touch.



Never work or drive while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.



Always use a safety harness when working at height, unless other protection is in place.



Always obey the speed limit and wear a seat belt.



Never enter the agreed exclusion zone, unless directed to by the person in charge.



CIRAS

CIRAS

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.



 Google Play

 App Store

Scan me

We find safety in listening.



Scan me



Contact the Rail team

- Matchtech 24 hour on call - 07786 265531 Store this number in your phone in case of an emergency.
- Use this on-call number if you need to contact someone from the company urgently, for example to report an accident / incident or if you are being pressured to do something that you are not comfortable with, such as being asked to exceed the working hours rules etc.
- This number is not to be used to query timesheets or to enquire about vacancies, it is an emergency contact number.
- If you would like to suggest a topic for future safety briefings, or need to talk to someone in confidence then email the Rail HSQE manager Joe Christopherson; jchristopherson@matchtech.com
- Your Feedback is always welcomed, email us at Matchtech railonboarding@matchtech.com

Previous monthly rail briefings

<https://www.matchtech.com/about-us/health-and-safety/safety-briefings>

