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Rail Safety Briefing

October 2026

Monthly Topics

Latest News

- Winter is coming

- Fast facts and Safety incident updates
  - Trackworker fatality
  - Lineside Materials, Scrap and surplus equipment

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
- CIRAS
- Contact Us

Purpose of this Briefing

As we move into the winter months, changing weather conditions, reduced daylight hours (clocks go back on Saturday 31st of October), and longer periods of darkness can significantly increase the risks associated with driving. This briefing is intended to raise awareness of the challenges that winter driving presents and to provide practical guidance on how to prepare yourself and your vehicle for safer journeys. By understanding the potential hazards of adverse weather, poor visibility, and changing road conditions, we can all take proactive steps to reduce risk, improve safety, and ensure we arrive at our destinations safely throughout the winter season.

By planning ahead, carrying out vehicle checks, and adapting driving behaviour to suit the conditions, we can minimise risk, protect ourselves and others on the road, and support our commitment to safe driving at work and in our personal lives.

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NetworkRail



What if...

...your journey is suddenly disrupted?

As part of our Drive Safe programme, this Winter Driving Guide kicks off our new focus on 'Safe Vehicle' – the steps that keep any vehicle safe, roadworthy and ready for every journey.

A few small checks can make all the difference.

- Check the weather, warnings and traffic, and plan extra time.
- Travel on main roads if possible, or the safest roads as advised by your sat nav, and share your journey plan and ETA with someone.
- If conditions are worsening, consider whether it is safer to continue or turn back and postpone your journey.
- Don't drive tired – Sleepiness is Serious.
- Make sure your phone is charged.

If you do break down, staying calm and visible keeps you safe.

- If you leave the vehicle, stand well away from traffic.
- On motorways, pull far left, turn wheels to the verge, exit via the left-hand door and wait safely away from traffic.
- Report Close Calls to help prevent future incidents.



SAFE STOPPING

What if...

...you need to stop fast in wet or icy conditions?

Tyres with worn tread can add up to 10–12 metres to your stopping distance in wet conditions, and as a general rule, the colder the temperature, the longer your stopping distance will be[2].

Your tyre condition is critical – they're the only thing keeping you connected to the road.

- Tread depth of at least 3mm ensures best grip.
- Cuts, bulges or damage increase the risk of blowout and losing control of the vehicle.
- Cold weather lowers tyre pressure, so plan to check and top up more.

And remember: stopping distances increase sharply in winter.

- Stay at least 8 seconds behind the vehicle ahead of you. If you're not used to winter driving, stay 10 seconds behind.
- Brake earlier and more gently.
- Know your vehicle and how to use its features (like ABS brakes) best to keep you safe.
- Minimise in-cab distractions to help you focus on reading the road.

2. Source: TyreSafe – Tyre Testing Results



WINTER VEHICLE CHECKS

What if...

...there's a hidden problem with your vehicle?

UK breakdown providers expect around 472,000 car battery failures between November and January – a huge spike caused by cold weather[3].

When driving a vehicle, always carry out your Vehicle First Use Walkaround Checks using the CheckedSafe app. Take the time to complete it properly and report any faults, and do not drive a vehicle if it is not safe to do so.

These essential vehicle checks can keep you safe this winter, so why not bring safety home?

When you go from a company vehicle to your personal one, remember to:

- test your battery, ignition and lights
- check your brakes
- make sure your wipers work properly and blades aren't damaged
- top up all fluids: screenwash, coolant, oil, brake fluid
- keep your fuel tank topped up, especially on longer trips.

3. Source: fleetnews.co.uk



WINTER KIT

What if...

...you're stranded in the freezing cold?

Only one in seven drivers carries an emergency winter kit[4] – how well equipped are you?

Pack these essentials to stay safe and visible – and keep them in the vehicle, not at home.

- Ice scraper and de-icer.
- Sturdy walking shoes.
- Blanket.
- Bottled water.
- Salt or grit.
- Hi-vis jacket.
- Shovel.

This simple winter kit can prevent a winter breakdown turning into a life-threatening situation.

4. Source: Go.Compare Car Insurance research (Nov 2025)



ELECTRIC VEHICLES

What if...

...you're driving an electric vehicle this winter?

Cold weather can cut EV range by up to 40%[5] – so it's important to adapt to conditions and plan ahead.

Key winter EV habits to adopt.

- Pre-condition your vehicle while it's still plugged in (warm the cabin and battery).
- Check tyre pressure and condition – under-inflated tyres and cold temperatures mean greater energy loss and longer stopping distances.
- Drive smoothly: accelerate gently and allow extra distance for braking.
- Plan charging stops if you're on a longer journey – lower winter range reduces room for error.

5. Source: Fleet News – "How tyre size and cold weather impacts EV range" (Oct 2025)



SEVERE WEATHER DRIVING

What if...

...you can't see the hazards ahead?

Always ensure you have good visibility of the road ahead and drive smoothly and steadily in poor weather conditions.

- Clear all windows and mirrors before setting off.
- Make sure all lights are clean and working.
- Use dipped headlights in rain, snow or low light.
- Only use fog lights when visibility is under 100 metres.
- Brake before corners, not during.
- Use a higher gear than usual to maintain control.
- Don't forget your sunglasses to manage the dazzling winter sun.

6. Source: Department for Transport (DfT)



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Shared Learning

everyone home safe every day

Trackworker fatality

Issued to: **All Network Rail line managers and safety professionals**

Ref: NRL26-05

Date of issue: 03/09/2026

Contact: InvestigationandAssurance@networkrail.co.uk

Overview

The investigation into the trackworker fatality at Elstree & Borehamwood will be published shortly. Ahead of its release, there are several important learning points that are relevant to all teams involved in the planning and delivery of work on or near the railway.

Where reactive work is necessary, the investigation reinforces the importance of effective planning, supervision, and fatigue management. As an organisation, we are seeing an increase in rough ride reports and infrastructure faults that require rapid response. These situations can quickly evolve beyond routine faulting activities and create additional risks if they are not managed through a robust Safe System of Work (SSoW).

While the focus is often on restoring the asset and maintaining services, work must remain properly planned, managed and protected. A suitable SSoW should be in place before work starts and must reflect the tasks actually being undertaken. If the scope, location or nature of the work changes, teams must stop, reassess the risks and review the plan before continuing.

The investigation also highlights the importance of managing fatigue. Extended shifts, repeated callouts and limited recovery time can affect concentration, risk awareness and decision-making. Fatigue should be treated as a safety risk in the same way as any other operational hazard. Managers and supervisors should actively monitor working hours, identify fatigue triggers and ensure appropriate controls are implemented where required.

The key learning is simple: when conditions change, the plan must change. Ensure the SSoW remains suitable, continually reassess risk, manage fatigue effectively and never reduce protection arrangements simply to meet resource constraints or operational pressures. If the planned protection cannot be delivered, stop and review the task. By maintaining the right controls throughout the response, we can continue to manage operational challenges while ensuring everyone goes home safe.

Key Learning

The hearts and minds of our people are often focused on solving the problem, protecting the railway and keeping services moving. In fault response and emergency situations, this commitment can lead to fatigue, changing risks and a temptation to adapt or downgrade safety arrangements to keep the work going. The key is to continually review the plan, challenge changing conditions, manage fatigue and ensure the Safe System of Work remains appropriate for the task. If the planned protection cannot be delivered, stop and reassess rather than lowering the standard of safety.

Key Messages

Fatigue must be actively managed

- Better identification and management of fatigue risk.
- Use of Fatigue Risk Assessments and Fatigue Management Plans.
- Intervention when fatigue thresholds are exceeded.
- Greater focus on cumulative fatigue, night working, on-call duties and recovery time.
- Understanding whether resource levels and organisational change are creating fatigue risk.

Work as planned must match work done

- Improve assurance of how work is actually delivered on site.
- Understand and challenge local workarounds and adaptations.
- Prevent deviations from authorised SSoWs becoming normal practice.
- Strengthen management visibility of frontline work.

Do not downgrade protection arrangements

- Any reduction in protection should be formally recognised as a significant change.
- Reducing blocked lines, removing protective resources or moving to lower levels of protection should trigger reassessment and authorisation.
- The safest reasonably practicable protection should remain the expectation.

- Greater emphasis on Adjacent Line Open (ALO) risk and reducing reliance on individual vigilance.

Leadership, planning and challenge

- Leaders should understand the gap between operational reality and documented plans.
- Safety controls must remain the priority during fault response and emergency work.
- Management challenge and oversight should identify when teams begin adapting plans to maintain delivery.
- Operational success should never be achieved at the expense of workforce protection.

Part of our group of Safety Bulletins



Safety Advice

everyone home safe every day



Issued to: **All Network Rail Line Managers and Safety Professionals**
Ref: NRA26-12
Date of issue: 22/09/2026
Location: National

Overview

Recent reports from the Netherlands and France have highlighted how seemingly ordinary materials can be used to disrupt railway operations. Dutch authorities are investigating incidents where metal pipes were deliberately attached to railway tracks, whilst French investigators are examining whether a train derailment may have been caused by a section of rail being placed on the track. These incidents remain under investigation by the relevant authorities.

Although there is currently no information indicating similar activity on Network Rail infrastructure, these events reinforce the importance of good housekeeping, control of materials, and vigilance for anything unusual or suspicious.

The controls contained within NR-L3-MTC-RCS0216-GA25 Lineside Materials Issue 8 help reduce the risk of materials being used to cause disruption, damage or unsafe conditions on the railway.

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Key Safety Messages

Remove, secure or store correctly

- Remove scrap, surplus materials, waste and cable drums promptly; return reusable items to depots.
- Keep tools and equipment clear of the open line and secure stored materials to fixed objects, ground anchors or within compounds.
- Use locked storage for small equipment and keep skips locked or under constant surveillance.

Pay particular attention to rail, fishplates, sleepers, troughing, pipes, timber, pallets, scaffolding, cable drums, fencing, signalling or electrical equipment, and waste. Left unsecured, these items could be moved onto the railway or used to interfere with infrastructure.

During Inspections and Site Visits

During maintenance, patrols, inspections and worksite set-up or close-down, look for:

- Unsecured, poorly stacked or abandoned materials, waste, tools or equipment near operational lines.
- Objects attached to infrastructure or placed within the four-foot or six-foot, including pipes, bars, rods, chains, wires or cables.
- Materials positioned so they could roll or be pushed onto the track, or repeated deposits in remote locations.
- Damaged fencing, forced access points, moved materials, suspicious fixings or signs of trespass.

Security Vigilance

Remain alert to people, vehicles or activity that appear unusual or out of place, including unauthorised access, movement of bulky materials, repeated visits to isolated locations, or suspicious activity around points, crossings, signalling equipment or access-control systems.

Remember that a single observation may seem insignificant but may become important when combined with other reports.

If You Find Something Suspicious

- **Do not** touch, move or dismantle it, or assume it is harmless.
- Move yourself to a position of safety and, if safe, prevent others approaching.
- Record the location and take photographs only if safe and appropriate.
- Notify your supervisor or manager; contact Route Control for an operational risk and preserve evidence.

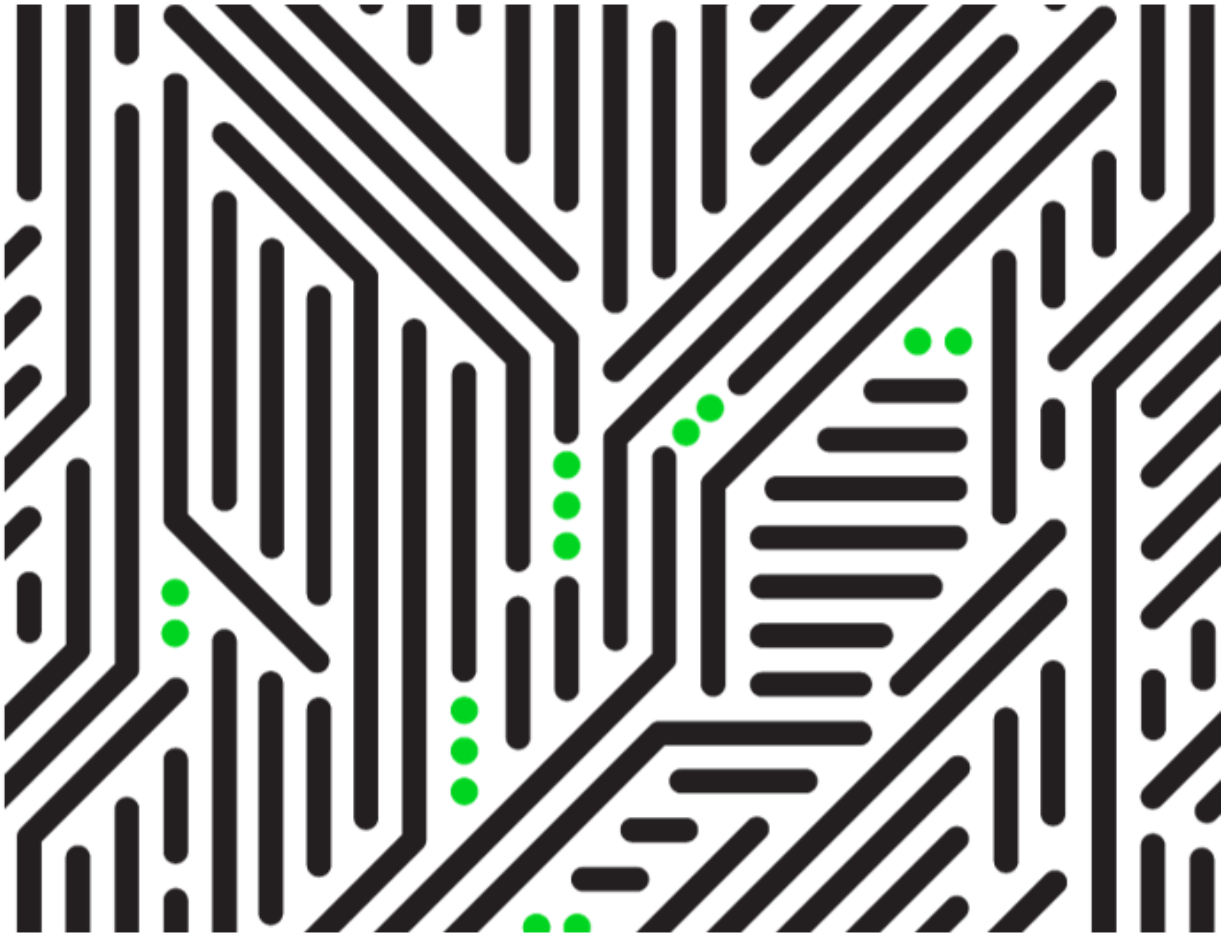
Reporting Security Concerns

Immediate threat: Contact Route Control or the Signaller immediately; call 999 if there is an immediate threat to life.

Suspicious activity or potential sabotage: Contact British Transport Police on 0800 40 50 40 or text 61016. Give the exact location, time and date, a description of the item or activity and any people or vehicles involved, plus photographs or CCTV information where available.

Part of our group of Safety Bulletins





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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/

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

Three simple swipes

to get everyone
home safe every day

NetworkRail

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 you 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"

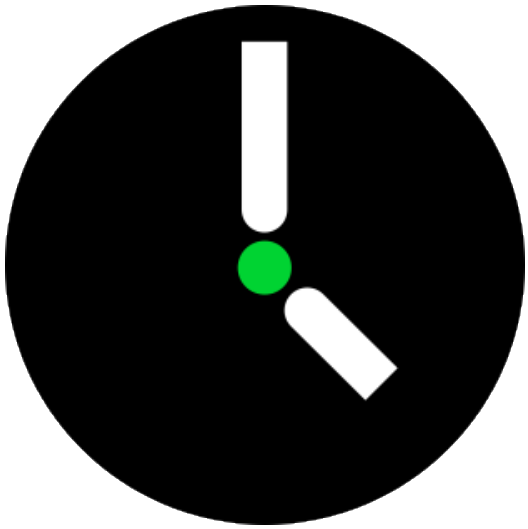
Do not start work until you are satisfied that the safety arrangements

are appropriate to the activity

Never, ever drive while feeling tired

If you are starting to feel fatigued while you are onsite than 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:

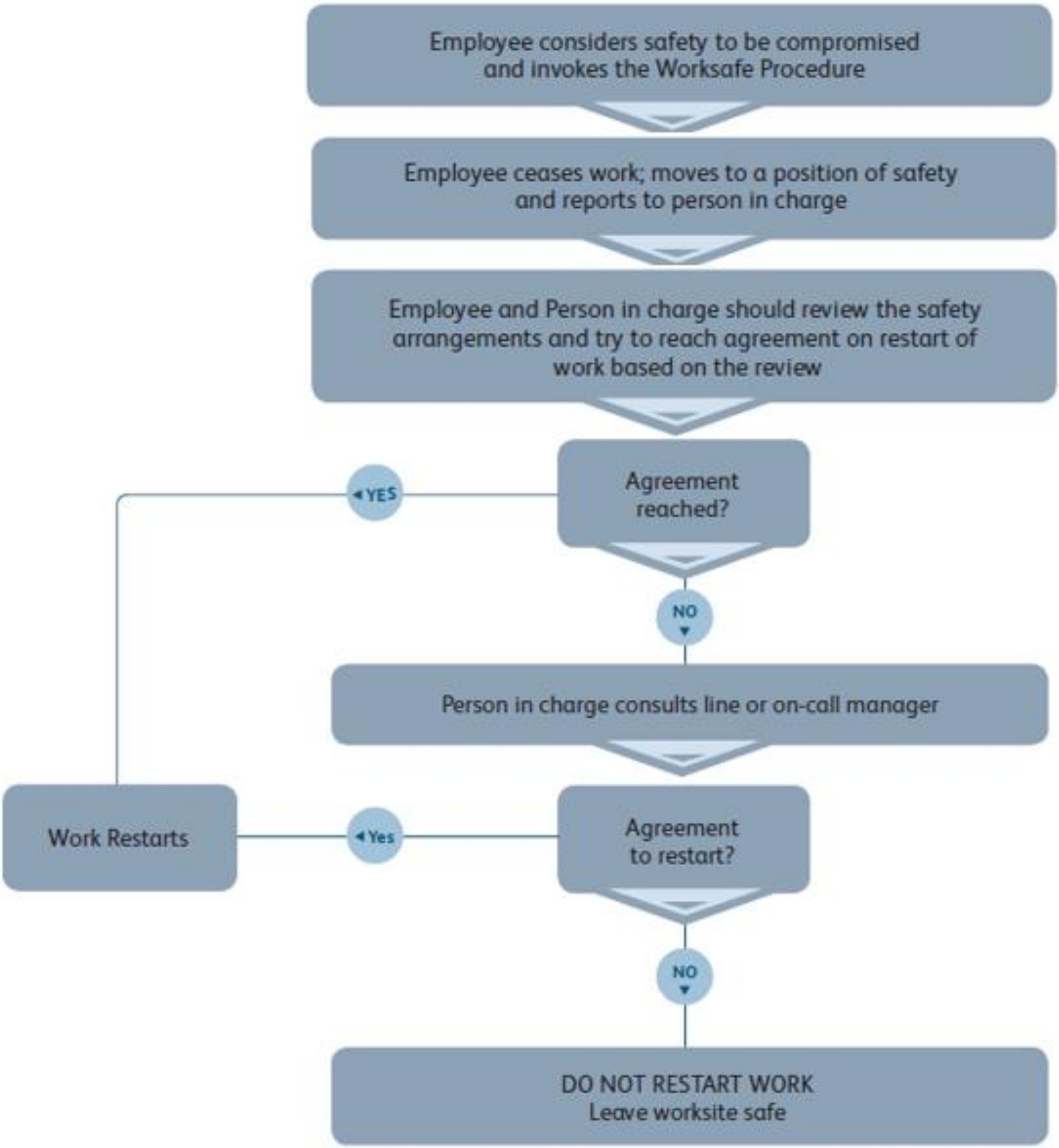
- Stop Work and talk to the Team Leader or person in charge; they should:
    - → Review the arrangements
    - → Change them if necessary and re-brief

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

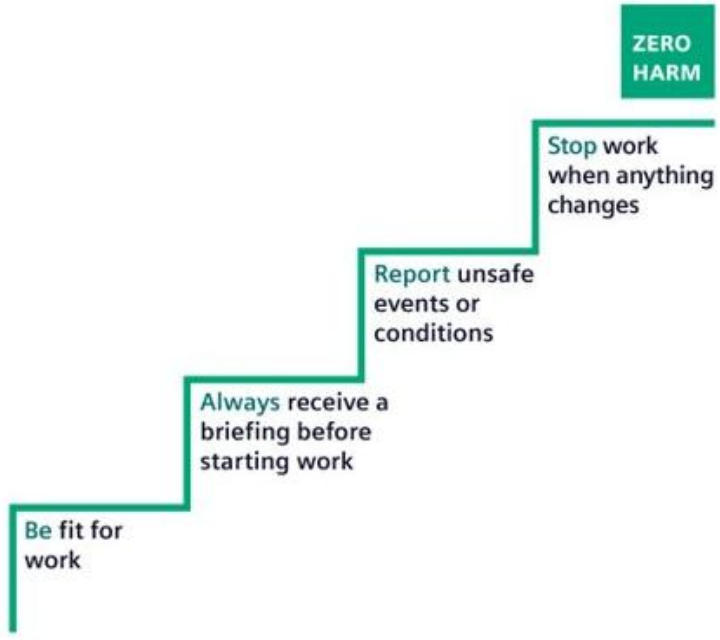
- **Safety sQuaRed**

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.




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.
Scan me
Google Play
App Store
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