

# PRB CONSULTING

## Rail Safety Bulletin

Issue 011 – February 2026



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# NRB25-05 Upper Body Burns during Weld Cutting Activities

## Overview

On Tuesday, 13 October 2025 at 08:50, a welder at the Shipley Train Depot development suffered burns to their upper body during cutting works taking place on sheet piling as part of the TransPennine Route Upgrade, for a new train maintenance facility.



This incident is currently under investigation, however while the facts are being established, please use the bullet points to discuss the importance of wearing and maintaining PPE correctly.

An operative was undertaking planned activities on a retaining wall, carrying out cutting using burning equipment. During this activity the individual's clothing has ignited with the individual sustaining burns to his upper body. The individual was treated onsite by first aiders then transported to Leeds hospital, before being transferred to Wakefield for ongoing treatment.

## Discussion Points

### Personal Protective Equipment discussions

- **Ensure** that PPE is clean, suitably maintained, and has the correct coatings applied as and when required in line with manufacturer's instructions.
- **Ensure** all PPE is Fully Fastened to provide full-body protection.
- **Ensure** boots, gloves, eye protection, hard hats or any additional PPE is worn as required.
- **Consider** wearing appropriate undergarments which have fire resistance properties.
- **Always** Quarantine any defective PPE until it has been suitably repaired or replaced.
- **Avoid** wearing synthetic (e.g. polyester) clothing under PPE as this can quickly catch fire and spread rapidly.

### Procedural discussions

- Are individuals completing thorough pre-use checks of all equipment to check for defects?
- Are Hot Work Permits being completed thoroughly and are all controls measures being followed?
- Are people aware of how to respond in an emergency? Is the correct equipment available and close to the work site?
- How do we challenge unsafe practices?



## Fatigue Management App for Rail

- ✓ Reduce your internal administration time
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- ✓ Good Occupational Health and Risk Management

- ✓ Manage fatigue risks, and reduce health risks
- ✓ Time v Cost - An Effective solution
- ✓ Monitor and Manage Fatigue and Risk Scores
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# NOTICE BOARD

NB 239  
Issue 1  
18<sup>th</sup> Feb 2026  
Expires: 17<sup>th</sup> Feb 2027  
Page 1 of 4



NETWORK RAIL – CCS (TA)  
SMTH Authority to Work via Sentinel

For interest to:



## Purpose

This Notice Board is a reminder that, from 10<sup>th</sup> March 2026:

- Authority to work arrangements for key SMTH (Signal Maintenance Testing Handbook) competencies should be managed within the Sentinel system, and
- Training and assessment for these competencies can only be undertaken by RTAS (Rail Training Assurance Scheme) assured training providers, trainers and assessors.

It briefs SMTH Competence Holders their Managers, Primary Sponsors and Training and Assessment Providers about the arrangements needed to comply with:

- NR/L3/SIG/11231/Part01/Module 04 (Competency of Staff).
- NR/L2/SIG/50035/07 (Competence and Training for the Competence Framework; CCS Signal Maintenance Testing)
- Sentinel Rules

## Scope

This Notice Board is applicable to the SMTH competencies listed in Table 1 below:

Short Code (Alias)	Competence Name	Description
SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.a	CCS Signal Maintenance Testing Core Skills	Core Skills
SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.b	CCS Signal Maintenance Testing – Aspect Testing	Aspect Testing
SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.c	CCS Signal Maintenance Testing – Points Testing	Points Testing
SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.d	CCS Signal Maintenance Testing – Cable Function Testing	Cable Function Testing
SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.f	CCS Signal Maintenance Testing – Diversion of a circuit	Diversion of a Circuit

**Table 1: SMTH competencies are that are in scope.**

## Background

In recent years Network Rail has changed the way in which SMTH competencies are managed within the organisation. As part of this change every individual who held any of the five SMTH competencies listed in Table 1 undertook a practical assessment to renew their SMTH competencies. All Network Rail staff holding

SMTH competencies had undertaken a practical assessment by December 2023 and now renew their SMTH competencies via a practical assessment every 36 months.

This process was then extended to the Network Rail supply chain to standardise the competence management process across the industry for these five Safety Critical SMTH competencies.



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## **Training and Assessment Standardisation**

Training and Assessment of the five key SMTH competencies was standardised across the industry using a common set of training materials. This was achieved for initial training in March 2024 and for the practical renewal assessment from October 2024.

Training and Assessment providers, Trainers and Assessors have all been undergoing a registration and assurance process with the NSAR (National Skills Academy for Rail) to continue delivering SMTH training and assessment.

## **Authority to Work Standardisation**

Network Rail supply chain SMTH transition into the Sentinel Authority to Work system started in 2024. Information on this programme of work has been made available at industry briefings and via SMTH Industry Competence Management Standardisation page on the Safety Central website.

## **Reminder of Action Required**

### **All Staff – Authority to work**

**From Tuesday 10th March 2026 industry agreement is that the Sentinel system should be used as the Authority to Work system for the five SMTH competencies listed in Table 1 above.**

All staff are reminded that:

- a) Once Sentinel is used as the Authority to Work system the Sentinel Scheme rules apply to these SMTH competencies.
- b) Sentinel cards should be checked before using any of the five SMTH competencies listed in Table 1 on Network Rail Managed Infrastructure.
- c) That those holding SMTH competencies as a “Signal Maintenance Tester in Action Learning” (indicated by the symbol shown in figure 1 below – P for probationary) are to be accompanied on-site by a “Competent and Experienced” SMTH holder who is accountable for the testing undertaken.



Figure 1: Probationary indicator in Sentinel system

### **All Staff – Training and assessment from Tuesday 10th March 2026**

All SMTH Training and Assessment activities for the five SMTH competencies listed in Table 1 can only be undertaken by RTAS assured Training providers / Trainers and Assessors.

### **SMTH Training and Assessment Providers**

For the five SMTH Competencies listed in Table 1, Assured SMTH Training and Assessment providers are required to upload their SMTH training and assessment outcomes directly to the Sentinel system for all events that are in progress or start on or after Tuesday 10th March 2026.

### **Network Rail Training**

Any trainers / assessors / providers that have not completed the NSAR Assurance application process cannot be used to deliver SMTH training or assessments for the five SMTH competencies listed in Table 1 for Network Rail employees from Tuesday 10th March 2026.



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# NR/L2/OHS/021 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

There are some forthcoming changes to the Network Rail standard in regard to Personal Protective Equipment – **compliance date: 6<sup>th</sup> June 2026**

The new standard (issue-6) focuses on a number of different areas of compliance.

The standard has been amended to:

- Reference Documentation. Include reference to *British Standard, BS 30417:2025 Provision of inclusive personal protective equipment (PPE) – Guide.*
- 4.1. PPE Requirements. The addition of “Sustainability”
- 4.1. Mandates where the need arises all recipients of specialist PPE/RPE shall be trained in its use.
- 4.2. Has been re worded to provide clarification to those who issue uniforms.
- Appendix A. Removed confusion by mandating items that cannot be worn on the NR managed infrastructure.



## The British Standard BS30417:2025 states:

*Employers should accommodate the diversity of their workforce when selecting PPE, including protected characteristics and other factors which might impact the individual end-users.*

*PPE options should be provided to accommodate a range of body shapes, sizes and physical characteristics, so as to enable equitable access and protection for all end-users.*

## RISQS IMPACT

Expect to see Auditors looking for evidence of:

- The purchasing of suitable clothing based on gender and other characteristics.
- Gathering correct measurements from staff before ordering clothing and footwear.

*For client using the PRB Document management suite: new version of the Induction Pack RAC-001 and PPE Issue Form RAC-011 will be available via the Client portal later this month.*



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# NR/L2/OHS/020 Track Visitor Permits

There are some significant changes being made to the Track Visitor Permit.

The implementation date for these changes is June 6<sup>th</sup> 2026.

Changes include:

**Sec 5.3** - not have been issued with **13** or more TVPs within the previous 12-month cycle

**Sec 5.5** – a new Medical Self-Certification form has been developed. (It is not yet known if when the Sentinel Database will change to reflect this new shortened version of the form). The standard now states that where a person does not satisfy the requirements of the medical form they must obtain a TVP Fitness Report issued by a qualified Occupational Health Advisor/Physician.

*We are trying to establish if this is any different form a standard Level 1 medical and will advise once we know more.*

*In addition, all Medical Reports must be retained for 6 years – again, we are trying to establish if these will be available through the Sentinel Database or provided in Hard Copy to the Primary Sponsor or candidate.*

*One thing that does remain is the strict ratio requirement of Blue Hats under the control of a single Controller of Site Safety. This ratio is 3:1*

*No more than 3 blue hat personnel within a group controlled by a COSS.*

*Please ensure this rule is adhered to when planning your works on or near the line.*

## PRB CONSULTING – Network Rail Standards Briefing

**Issue -139 March 2026**

The standard briefing will be issued in early March 2026 by PRB Consulting

Once received please review and ensure those impacted by any new changes are made aware



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# QUIZ TIME

There were quite a few correct entries to the Quiz that was set in December 2026 Rail Safety Bulletin

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## **The Question**

***How fast was the train was travelling at when it struck landslip debris near Sharp Summit?***

***Answer: 83 mph (134 km/h)***

**The first name out of the stationmaster's hat was... Gary Brackley from Infinity Training and Assessing**

**Congratulations Gary, the M&S Voucher is on its way!!**

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So, this month we have another opportunity to create a winner!

There is a £25 M&S Voucher up for grabs in this, the February Rail Safety Bulletin.

***To be a winner this month, just answer the simple question below;***

## **The Question**

**NR/L2/OHS/020 relates to which Network Rail Standard?**



Answers by email please to [info@prb-consulting.co.uk](mailto:info@prb-consulting.co.uk) to be in with a chance of winning the £25.00 M&S voucher – Put QUIZ in the subject.

Closing Date: 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026

