

# PRB CONSULTING

## Rail Safety Bulletin

Issue 010 – December 2025



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# Drink and Drug Driving at Christmas

## Drink and drug-driving kills

Drink-driving and drug-driving are both extremely dangerous, and a high proportion of drivers and riders dying on UK roads are over the limit for drink, drugs, or both. In 2022, [22% of deceased drivers](#), and 34% of all drivers tested were over the legal alcohol limit, which is [80mg per 100ml of blood](#) in England and Wales.



In 2022, impairing drugs were detected in 19% of drivers killed, and 30% of those tested. Impairing drugs can be prescription or over-the-counter medications, as well as illegal drugs.

Drivers have a legal duty to be fit to drive, and you are breaking the law if you drive with any impairing drug in your system, or more than the legal level of alcohol.

Your employer also has a legal duty to make sure that you are not driving for work when impaired – so as well as setting rules about driving, they may also test you for drugs or alcohol. Some companies use systems like alco-locks which test a driver's breath before enabling the ignition.

## Why is it so dangerous?

Alcohol overrides inhibitions and impairs concentration and coordination. It also acts as a sedative. Even 'legal' quantities of alcohol impair performance.

The most commonly abused drugs are codeine, cocaine and cannabis. Each seriously affects your ability to drive, including poor decision-making, impaired perception and impaired reaction times.

It isn't possible to tell when alcohol or drugs will have left your body. There are some broad guidelines for alcohol, such as one unit per hour, but the truth is it is very individual – a little like having a broad guideline for how fast you can run a mile – and so that one unit-one hour guideline is really a minimum.

This means that after a few pints or glasses of wine in the evening, you could still be over the limit driving to work the next morning.

Drugs can linger in the body for a long time, and the [minimum threshold](#) for detection is extremely low. You might not think that using drugs on a Friday night has any relevance to driving two or three days later, but they are likely to still be in your body, still detectable, still illegal and possibly still impairing your ability to drive safely.

## The scale of the problem

In 2022, [police breathalysed 66,000 drivers](#) who had been involved in collisions (out of a total of 177,000) and found 6% of them were over the legal limit. (RAS2041) Almost one-quarter of car drivers (23%) between the ages of 16 and 19 who were killed were over the alcohol limit and 26% of those between 20 and 29.

However almost half the fatalities (39%) between the ages of 30 and 39 were over the limit. (RAS2032).

The police do not test every driver – even those involved in collisions – and so drink-driving is likely to be more common than police statistics suggest. 5% of drivers surveyed say they have driven at least once in the past year when they suspected [they were over the legal limit](#) (gov.uk), 2% of them regularly (RAS51101).

Drug driving is even harder to quantify, as recreational drug use can be widespread and very hard to spot. A [government survey](#) showed that 2.5% of people have taken cocaine and 7.5% cannabis in the year to March 2023.



The government has started to collate road deaths and casualties in which [drug impairment is a contributory factor](#). In 2022, of 618 deceased drivers tested for impairing drugs, 185 were positive. This included drugs such as ketamine, LSD, cocaine and fentanyl.

If you do drive over the limit for alcohol or drugs, you are taking a very serious risk with your safety and that of those around you. And if you don't ever drive impaired, then be prepared to speak up if you see friends or colleagues who do – you might save their life.

### Prescription drugs

Prescription and over-the-counter drugs can also impair driver performance. Always check with your doctor or pharmacist whether medication is OK for driving. Medicines for some common conditions, like pain, hay fever, anxiety, insomnia or seizures, can make driving unsafe.

Prescription or over-the-counter drugs can also affect your driving if mixed with other drugs or alcohol.

Even if the medication you have taken is legal, driving while impaired is not.

CBD oil is increasingly used in the UK and properly manufactured and analysed products should not contain more than trace amounts of THC, the cannabinoid which provides the 'high'. However, if you buy CBD products on the internet or sourced from other countries, check the full chemical analysis - it may be incompatible with driving rules.

### More than your job's worth?

Companies are increasingly instituting zero tolerance policies for drink and drug driving and may even test employees randomly. Failing a drug or alcohol test – in the workplace or on the roadside - is likely to put your job at risk.

### Legal penalties

There are severe legal penalties if you are caught driving under the influence. Drug-driving can win you a minimum 12-month driving ban; a criminal record; an unlimited fine; and up to 6 months in prison. The endorsement remains on your driving licence for 11 years.

Drink driving or attempting to drink-drive (which is classed as being over the limit OR unfit through drink) carries a potential sentence of 6 months' imprisonment, an unlimited fine and a driving ban for at least 1 year (3 years if convicted twice in 10 years).

It is also illegal to be in charge of a vehicle while over the limit.

These penalties are much more severe if a driver causes injury or death while impaired.



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# NRB25-04 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.

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.



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.

## 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 such as 100% cotton which has natural fire resisting 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?



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# Fatal Accident at Chestnut Grove Footpath Crossing

Investigation into a fatal accident involving a young person at Chestnut Grove footpath crossing, Burton Joyce, Nottinghamshire, 26 November 2025.

At around 19:05 on 26 November 2025, a young person was struck by a train and fatally injured while crossing the railway on Chestnut Grove footpath crossing, which is situated in Nottinghamshire between Lowdham and Burton Joyce stations.



The train was travelling at about 60 mph (97 km/h) at the time of the accident.

Chestnut Grove footpath crossing provides pedestrians with access between the village of Burton Joyce and footpaths leading to the river Trent. The crossing has gates on either side of the railway and is provided with signage which instructs users how to cross.

Our investigation will determine the sequence of events that led to the accident and will include a consideration of:

- the factors which may have influenced the decisions and actions of those involved
- any previous incidents at Chestnut Grove footpath crossing and how these may be relevant to the accident
- the management of risk at this crossing including how this was co-ordinated between Network Rail, relevant local government, and other organisations
- Network Rail's wider strategy for assessing and mitigating risk at footpath crossings
- any relevant underlying factors.

Our investigation is independent of any investigation by the railway industry or by the industry's regulator, the [Office of Rail and Road](#).

We will publish our findings, including any recommendations to improve safety, at the conclusion of our investigation. This report will be available on our website.

Source: Gov.uk



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# New Requirements for Safety Critical Communications (SCC)

Network Rail Standards NR/L2/OPS/301 & NR/L3/OPS/301 – Effective 1 March 2026

## 1. Overview of the Change

Network Rail has introduced a new suite of standards governing the management and recording of Safety Critical Communications (SCCs). These become mandatory on 1 March 2026 for Network Rail, contractors, and anyone performing safety-critical communications as defined in **NR/GN/OPS/301**.

## 2. Key Changes You Need to Be Aware Of

- a) SCC recording is now an explicit requirement.  
Safety Critical Communications must be recorded wherever practicable using an approved method.
- b) Only one recording is required.  
A single authoritative recording—normally the signalling/control end—meets the requirement.
- c) Mobile-to-mobile SCCs must be addressed.  
Organisations must ensure these calls are recorded or have a risk-based justification.
- d) Contractors are explicitly included.  
Contractors must comply with SCC recording arrangements.
- e) Retention requirements are formalised.  
90 days standard; up to 12 months for CRG; up to 3 years for competence; up to 6+ years for investigations.

### **Please Note**

The new standards require all calls to be recorded and retained.  
However, this DOES NOT mean that **ALL** parties must record **ALL** calls.

## 3. What Companies Need To Do Now

- Identify all staff/contractors performing SCCs.
- Check how SCCs are currently recorded.
- Put in place an approved SCC recording method.
- Conduct a risk assessment where recording is not possible.
- Update internal procedures and training.

## 4. Compliance Deadline

Mandatory enforcement date: 1 March 2026. By this date, companies must have compliant SCC recording arrangements, completed risk assessments, trained staff, and be able to demonstrate compliance.



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## Key Takeaways

- SCC recording is now a formal requirement.
- Only one end of the call needs to be recorded.
- Organisations—not individuals—are responsible for ensuring SCCs are recorded.
- Contractors must fully comply.

## FAQs

### 1. Who do these new rules apply to?

- i. The Network Rail Standard OPS/301 applies to Network Rail staff and contractors.

### 2. Must all safety critical communications be recorded?

- i. OPS/301 requires SCCs to be recordable using an approved method and captured via suitable systems. It does not say that every call on every device must be automatically recorded.

### 3. Do Both parties need to record the same call?

- i. OPS/301 requires one authoritative recording of the SCC (normally at the fixed/control end). It does not require both callers to record the same conversation.

### 4. Who holds the responsibility for recording calls?

- i. Responsibility for ensuring SCC recording lies with the organisation (Network Rail and/or Principal Contractor), including risk assessment and provision of systems. Individuals are required to use the approved method but are not personally responsible for supplying recording infrastructure

### 5. Must recording be done over mobile voice networks

- i. OPS/301 is technology-neutral. It does not state that SCCs must be carried over the mobile voice network; it cares that they are securely and reliably recorded, with appropriate access, retention and security.

### 6. What are the retention periods of recordings?

- i. OPS/301 defines detailed retention rules, for example:
- b. 90 days: standard retention
- c. Longer periods where recordings are used for:
  - i. Competence (e.g. up to 3 years)
  - ii. Investigations/legal processes (e.g. up to 6+ years)

### 7. Does the standard allow BYOD (bring your own device)?

- i. OPS/301 allows BYOD provided:
- ii. SCCs are still captured in a compliant way.
- iii. Data protection, security and access control requirements are met.
- iv. Recording and retention arrangements meet OPS/301 and GDPR expectations.
- v. Any solution can be compliant if it meets these criteria

**Be aware of claims being made by some organisations & suppliers of recording equipment that may give the impression that ALL contractors are responsible for recording EVERY conversation.**



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# Urgent Safety Advice 01/2025: Use of Remote Earthwork Monitoring Equipment

## Safety issue

Lineside monitoring equipment used on Network Rail managed infrastructure may not be able to detect the failure of slopes in some circumstances. As a result, this equipment may not provide data as expected to support safety decision-making, particularly during extreme weather conditions.



## Safety advice

Duty holders should take urgent steps to consider and, if necessary, mitigate this risk.

## Issued to

Network Rail, other infrastructure managers, and those companies supplying or monitoring relevant equipment.

## Background

At around 06:10 on 3 November 2025, a passenger train operated by Avanti West Coast, the 04:28 Glasgow Central to London Euston service, derailed after striking a landslip near to Shap Summit, between Penrith North Lakes and Oxenholme Lake District stations.

The train was travelling at around 83 mph (134 km/h) when it struck landslip debris that had been washed onto the track. This material lifted the first bogie off the rails and to the right, where it ran derailed for around 560 metres.

There were nine staff and 86 passengers on board the train at the time of the collision. Four people were treated for minor injuries as a result of the accident, and damage was caused to the train and to railway infrastructure.

The landslip was caused by a period of heavy and sustained rainfall. RAIB's preliminary examination found that a drainage channel, which runs across the cutting slope above the washed-out material, was unable to accommodate the volume of water which was present. This led to the slope material below becoming saturated, initiating the landslip.

The cutting slope was fitted with remote monitoring equipment, which was designed to detect ground movement. At the time of the accident, the monitoring equipment at Shap was recording data and reporting to its online monitoring service. However, it had not been formally entered into



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operational use, so was not sending alerts to the Network Rail control centre. Similar equipment is operational on other parts of the railway infrastructure.

This type of equipment, when configured for Network Rail slope monitoring applications, is mounted on steel spikes every 2 metres along the base of the slope. The position of the sensors is recorded at intervals.

Movement of the sensors is recorded by the monitoring system as four colour-coded levels of alert, of which the highest two are considered to represent significant movement:

1. Green (information) – movement of between 10 and 30 mm
2. Amber (major) – movement of between 30 and 60 mm
3. Red (severe) – movement of between 60 and 90 mm
4. Black (critical) – movement of more than 90 mm

Around 4 hours before the accident, the sensors nearest to the landslip began to show minor movement of the earthwork, below the threshold needed to trigger a green alert. This movement continued for the next 2 hours, remaining below the green alert threshold.

At around 04:30, when the evidence available to RAIB suggests that the landslip occurred, the two sensors in the path of the debris were tipped over and subsumed by the material sliding down the slope. It would appear that this occurred too quickly for them to determine and transmit their movement and to generate an alert.

RAIB has further concluded that the sensors' wireless signal was also unable to pass through the layer of material which covered them. This is based on them being able to re-establish a connection and report a variety of alert levels as the site was cleared.



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# GERT8000: Reissued Handbooks (Effective 06 December 2025)

## Affected Handbooks are:

HB1, HB3, HB5, HB7, HB9, HB9 ERTMS, HB12, HB12 ERTMS, HB19.

## Key Cross-Cutting Themes

- Removal of Safe Work Leader (SWL) references – competency now obsolete.
- Significant restrictions on unassisted lookouts:
  - Not permitted in darkness, poor visibility, tunnels, or within work sites.
  - Not allowed for groups walking.
  - Only allowed for working groups under strict conditions ( $\leq 25$  mph, single-line approach, director-level approval).
  - Distant and intermediate lookouts withdrawn.
- COSS/IWA no longer required to sign work-site certificates – ES records details instead

## HB1 – General Duties & Track Safety

- ‘Lineside’ now defined as “the boundary,” not boundary fence.
- New instructions added for reporting dangerous goods incidents.
  - Limited clearance sign explanation corrected: risk

## HB3 – Duties of Lookout & Site Warden

- Unassisted lookouts allowed only when trains  $\leq 25$  mph and single-line approach.
- Not permitted in darkness/poor visibility/tunnels.
- Distant/intermediate lookouts removed; “pee-wee” withdrawn.
- All SWL references removed.



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### **HB5 – Hand-Signalling Duties**

- End of degraded working sign replaces hand-signaller for wrong-direction trains.
- Introduction of signaller's agent (must call signaller if train passes sign without authority).
- Detonators no longer required at this point.
- Temporary Block Working withdrawn. SI W rules updated

### **HB7 – Controller of Site Safety (COSS)**

- Lookout systems heavily restricted; only allowed when no other safe system is viable.
- Clarified rules for group supervision and splitting groups.
- Updated definition of approaching trains and warning

### **HB9 – IWA/COSS Setting Up Safe Systems in Possessions**

- Lookouts no longer permitted within work sites.
- ES now records work-site certificate details—no COSS/IWA signatures required.
- Working outside a work site without PICOP authority removed.

### **HB12 – Engineering Supervisor (ES)**

- New Appendix B form allows COSS to begin AC isolation work before work site set-up.
- Lookouts prohibited within work sites.
- Signatures removed from work-site certificate.
- RT3199 updated to remove SWL.

### **HB19 – Work on Signalling Equipment**

- New instruction clarifies signalling technicians may operate failed points only as an interim measure.

### **HB12 ERTMS – ES on ERTMS Lines**

- Same changes as HB12: no signatures, no lookouts, SWL removed.

For hard copies of updated Rulebooks: [www.willsons.com](http://www.willsons.com)



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# QUIZ TIME

There were quite a few correct entries to the Quiz that was set in October 2025 Rail Safety Bulletin

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## **The Question**

***On what date will the COSS changes come into effect?***

***Answer: 5<sup>th</sup> December 2025***

**The first name out of the stationmaster's hat was... Lilli White of Engineering Consultancy Service Ltd**

**Congratulations Lilli, 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 December Rail Safety Bulletin.

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

## **The Question**

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



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> January 2026**

December 2025 – Issue 010

Briefed By:		Briefers Role:	
Briefing Date:		Briefers Signature:	
Sentinel Coordinator:		Sentinel Coordinator Signature:	

**By signing below, I confirm that I have received and understood the briefing material contained within this bulletin.**