



ASPR 2008 Overview

Introduction

This report reviews the rail industry's safety performance over the calendar year 2008 and assesses it against the trajectories for the Key Risk Areas identified by the 2008–2010 Strategic Safety Plan (SSP). It benchmarks rail safety against other transport modes, reviews the way that the industry learns from accidents, and discusses how the European Rail Agency will be assessing the safety of the UK railway.

Headlines

- There were no passenger or workforce fatalities in train accidents in 2008. This is the third year in the last four with no fatalities.
- In 2008, 70 accidental fatalities, 422 major injuries and 12,308 incidents of minor injuries or shock / trauma were recorded. The total level of harm in 2008 was 132.1 fatalities and weighted injuries (FWI). This is 2% higher than 2007.
- Five passengers died in separate incidents – all at stations. This is the lowest recorded passenger fatality total. The fatality rate per passenger journey is also historically low.
- There were 47 potentially higher-risk train accidents (PHRTAs); this is the same as the 2007 total and similar to the average for the previous three years.
- The risk from signals passed at danger (SPADs) at the end of 2008 stood at around 15% of its March 2001 level, compared with 13% at the end of 2007.
- Three members of the workforce died in accidents during 2008: two track workers and one other member of staff. This compares with two workforce fatalities in both 2007 and 2006.
- Twelve pedestrians died at level crossings in 2008, compared with nine in 2007. This is the highest number of pedestrian fatalities since 1997 (when there were also 12).
- There were two accidental fatalities involving road vehicle occupants at level crossings. This is comparable with levels seen over the previous three years.
- Fatalities from suicide (209) and trespass (47) totalled 256. This is similar to the average for the previous three years.
- Overall, there is evidence that the industry is delivering the trajectories published in the SSP; in 11 of the 15 measures covering the Key Risk Areas, performance in 2008 was in line with the expected trajectory.

The Annual Safety Performance Report (ASPR) relates to the mainline railway in Great Britain. Its scope is generally limited to incidents that occur in stations, on trains, or elsewhere on Network Rail managed infrastructure (such as the track and the area around it). However, workforce fatalities that occur away from these locations, but during working time, are also included.

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Summary of fatalities and injuries

Table 1 provides a summary of the fatalities and injuries recorded in 2008 (excluding suicide and attempted suicide). The average FWI for the previous three years is also provided for comparison.

Table 1. Summary of injuries in 2008 by person type (excluding suicide)

	Fatalities	Major injuries	RIDDOR-reportable minor injuries	Non RIDDOR-reportable minor injuries	Shock and trauma	FWI	Average FWI (2005-07)
Passenger	5	239	1091	4017	274	38.7	42.3
Workforce	3	134	538	4864	1399	26.2	29.0
Public	62	49	54	66	5	67.2	57.6
Total	70	422	1683	8947	1678	132.1	128.8

Train accidents

2008 was the third year out of the last four with no workforce or passenger fatalities in train accidents. There has been a significant long-term reduction in the rate of fatal train accidents. The current average is less than one fatal train accident per year.

The types of train accident with the greatest potential to cause harm are known as 'potentially higher-risk train accidents', or PHRTAs. There were 47 PHRTAs in 2008, which is the same as last year, and similar to the average for the previous three years.

Because serious train accidents are rare, RSSB also analyses trends in precursors and their associated risk. This analysis shows that the underlying risk from train accidents was relatively static over the year, consolidating the improvements seen earlier in the decade.

Passenger safety

Trends in passenger harm have been generally improving since 2001, despite sustained growth in the number of passenger journeys. The rate of passenger harm per journey in 2008 was 16% lower than in 2007.

Five passengers died in individual incidents – all at stations. Of these, four involved moving trains (two people were struck on station crossings, one person fell down the gap between the train and platform when the train was departing, and one person was struck after falling from the platform). The fifth passenger was fatally injured after a fall on an escalator. The total of five passenger fatalities is the lowest ever recorded. This compares with ten fatalities in 2007 and an average of 8.6 fatalities per year for the previous three years.

The total number of major injuries in 2008 was 239, which is level with 2007. However, in 2007, 28 major injuries occurred in the train accident at Grayrigg. If injuries in train accidents are excluded, the number of major injuries rose in 2008, by 14%. There were no major injuries to passengers in train accidents during 2008.

Workforce safety

Three members of the workforce were killed in 2008. This is one more than the number of workforce fatalities in both 2006 and 2007, but fewer than previous years. Two of the fatalities were track workers: one was struck by a road-rail machine while on the track; the other was killed in a fall when the basket of a road-rail vehicle became detached from its mounting points. The third fatality was to a person acting as a banksman (that is, a person responsible for assisting in the manoeuvring, reversing and loading/unloading of vehicles); he was trapped between two non-rail vehicles while working off Network Rail managed infrastructure.

Overall there were 134 workforce major injuries. Although this is a slight increase from both 2006 and 2007, it is an improvement over earlier years.

Consistently, more than half of the major injuries have occurred to track workers (almost 60% of all workforce major injuries in 2008) and most of these were caused by slips, trips and falls or other personal accidents about the track. There was an increase from 70 to 79 in the occurrence of track worker major injuries in 2008 from the 2007 level.

There were 20 major injuries to train crew. This is an increase compared to the 12 occurring in 2007 but it is the second lowest level since 2001.

Public safety

Most risk occurs to members of the public, much of it being a consequence of their own behaviour. There were 47 trespasser fatalities during the year. Trespasser fatalities in 2008 equalled the highest number of fatalities over the last eight years and represented the second consecutive rise in trespass fatalities since 2006.

Twelve other accidental fatalities to members of the public occurred at level crossings (ten pedestrians and two road vehicle drivers). A further three people died at locations other than level crossings. Two involved falls from bridges; the third was a council bridge inspector, who died when his metal measuring tape came into contact with overhead line equipment.

There were 209 suicides (or suspected suicides) over the year; this is comparable with recent years.

Level crossings

For the second year in a row, there has been an increase in harm at level crossings. In 2008, the total harm at level crossings was 15.3 FWI. This compares to 12.4 FWI in 2007 and an average of 9.8 FWI for the three-year period 2005–2007.

Twelve pedestrians died as a result of being struck by trains at level crossings. Two of these were passengers at station crossings. This is the highest number of pedestrian fatalities since 1997, when there were also 12.

There were 19 collisions between trains and road vehicles, the highest number of collisions since 2003, when there were 24. Most of the collisions occurred on user-worked crossings, where the user is responsible for ensuring that it is safe to cross. There were two road vehicle user fatalities; one at an automatic open crossing and one at an automatic half-barrier crossing.

Personal security

The number of attacks on passengers and members of the public has fallen for three consecutive years, with the total number of assault crimes recorded by British Transport Police for 2008 being 9% less than that for 2007, which was in turn 10% lower than 2006.

Overall there has been a downward trend in the level of harm to members of the workforce from assaults in recent years. Nevertheless, the personal security of rail staff remains an issue of concern. There was a 5% increase in the harm from assaults on members of the workforce in 2008. This was the first increase since 2004, and is due to a greater number of assaults resulting in major injuries (ten in 2008, compared with six in 2007). The number of assaults resulting in minor injuries continued to decrease in 2008, the sixth year in a row that this has been the case. The figure fell by 22% in 2008, compared with 2007. Eight per cent of all workforce assaults result in a period of absence from work.

Reports of verbal abuse against staff rose during the year, although it is possible that continued improvements in reporting are behind this trend. Ticket disputes are the most common contributory factor in staff assaults. Alcohol can also exacerbate situations and increase the incidence of assault.

Station safety

Excluding trespassers, six people died in accidents at stations. Five were passengers; one died as a result of a fall on an escalator and the other four were struck or crushed by trains. The sixth fatality was a member of the public, who died after falling from an overbridge onto the station roof. The last three years have seen lower levels of non-trespass related harm than before.

Two-thirds of passenger harm at stations is as a result of slips, trips and falls of the type that could occur in any public building. Approximately half of the harm from slips, trips and falls occurs on stairs and escalators.

Summary of performance

The Strategic Safety Plan has the principle of 'maintaining safety in a period of change' as the industry's overarching objective. It is based on companies' own safety plans, and sets out 15 trajectories that reflect the industry's planned actions in Key Risk Areas.

In 2008, the overall story was one of consolidating the progress achieved in recent years; the industry continued or maintained safety improvements in many areas against a backdrop of increasing passenger numbers. In 11 of the 15 trajectories, performance was in line with the industry's expectations. The areas that showed the greatest improvements were those connected with: workforce slips, trips and falls in stations; passenger behaviour in stations; rolling stock; and vandalism. The area that saw the greatest deterioration was public behaviour at level crossings, where there was an increase in the number of pedestrian fatalities.