

Summary of safety performance for 2007



Rail Safety & Standards Board

Introduction

This paper provides an initial, high-level, overview of performance on the main safety indicators for 2007 for the GB mainline railway. A more detailed assessment will be presented in the Annual Safety Performance Report (ASPR), due in April 2008.

The information in this summary is provisional and subject to change as more information becomes available. This is particularly true of fatalities involving trespass or suicide.

Key Headlines

- For the first time in three years, there was a single passenger fatality in a train accident.
- For the third consecutive year, there were no workforce fatalities in train accidents.
- No passengers died as a result of assault. Six passengers died in accidents at stations.
- Two members of the workforce died in accidents in the trackside environment, the same number as in 2006.
- The number of potentially higher-risk train accidents (PHRTAs) was 11% higher than in 2006.
- At the end of 2006, the risk from signals passed at danger (SPADs) stood at less than 12% of its March 2001 level, a slight increase on the 10% level reported at the end of 2006.
- There were three accidental fatalities involving vehicle drivers at level crossings, representing an increase on the zero recorded in 2006 but returning to levels more consistent with the previous 5 years.
- Eight pedestrians died at level crossings, an increase of three when compared to 2006.
- Fatalities arising from trespass and suicide reduced during 2007 to 249 (from 286 in 2006).

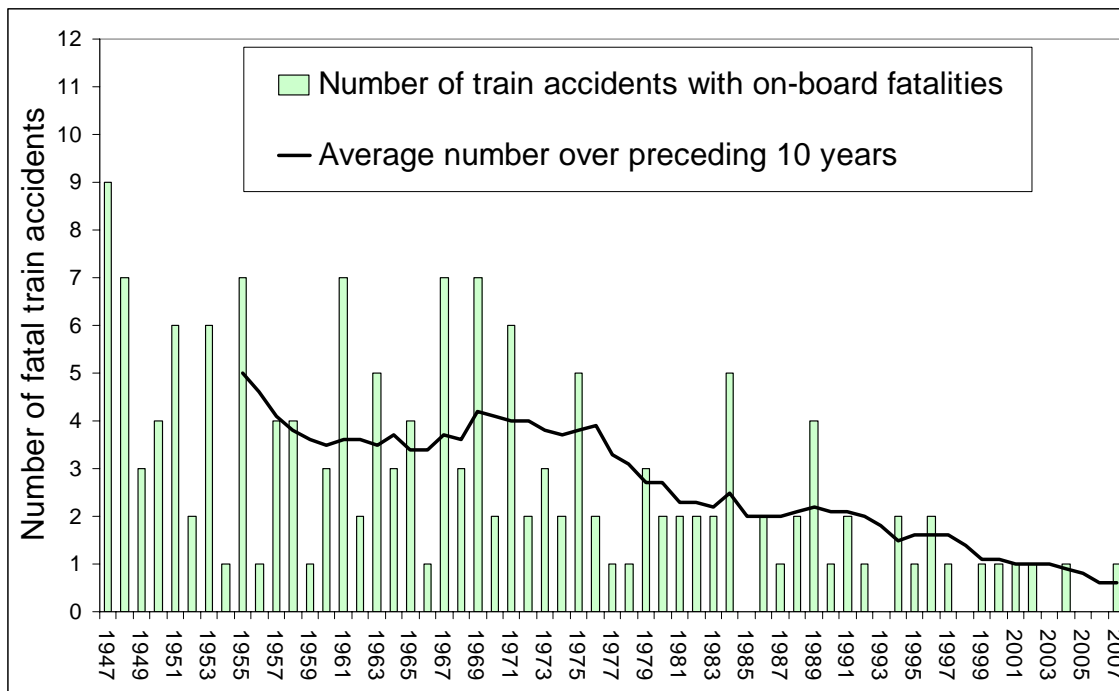
Train accidents

On 23 February, a passenger was fatally injured when a passenger train derailed at Grayrigg in Cumbria (London North Western). The immediate cause of the derailment was deemed to be the stretcher bar arrangement at the points, which resulted in a loss of gauge separation at the switch blade. This is the first on-board fatality in a train accident since November 2004 (Ufton Nervet). The average number of train accidents with on-board fatalities (ie excluding those that result in public fatalities alone) over the previous ten years is constant compared with last year and, as shown in the following chart, remains historically low.

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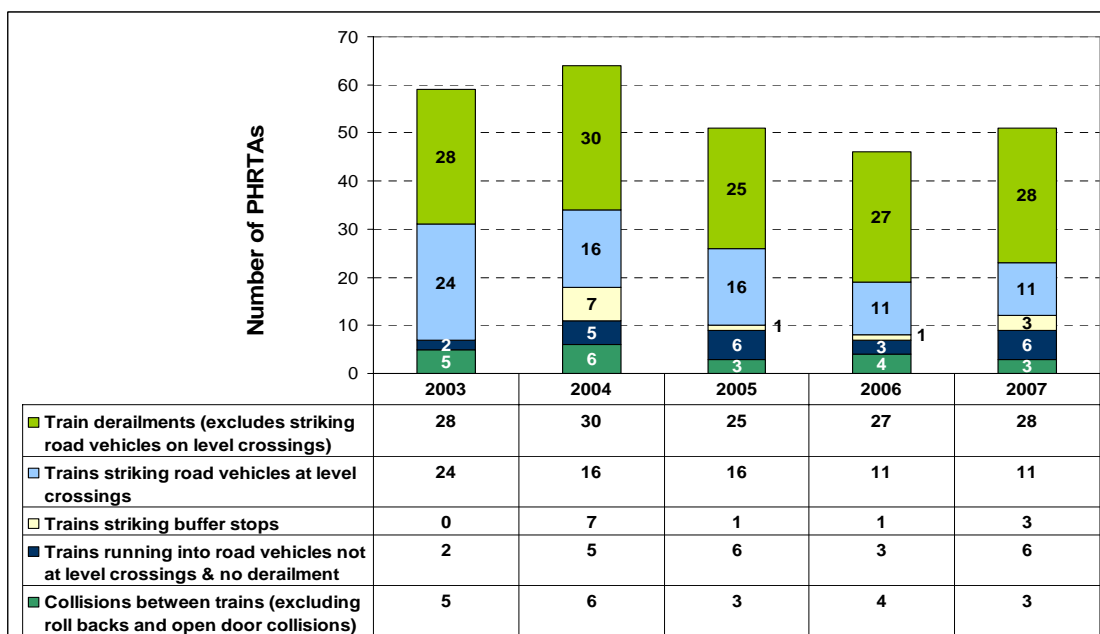


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Potentially high-risk train accidents

In addition to the fatal accident at Grayrigg, there were a further 50 potentially high-risk train accidents (PHRTAs), none of which resulted in major injuries to train occupants. These comprise statutorily reportable train collisions (excluding roll back and open door collisions) and buffer stop collisions, trains striking road vehicles (with derailment and without derailment), and other derailments. The following chart shows that over the past three years, the occurrence of PHRTAs has stabilised around a level lower than that seen prior to 2005.



Information contained in this summary should be treated as provisional.

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The three train collisions all involved passenger trains and all occurred at low-speed. Two involved station arrivals and one was due to an uncoupling error.

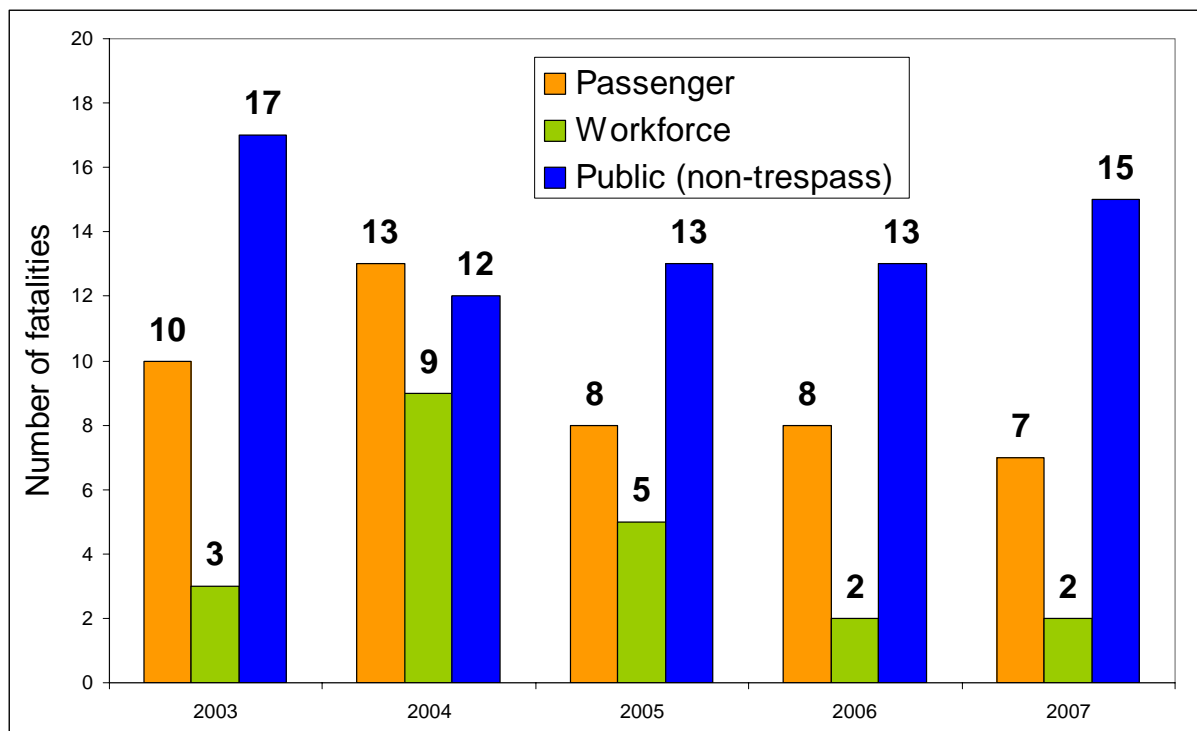
Three of the eleven collisions between trains and road vehicles at level crossings resulted in fatalities to road vehicle occupants. Two of these three events were accidental, and resulted in three deaths; the remaining event is currently classed as a suspected suicide. Away from level crossings, six collisions occurred between trains and road vehicles.

There were 28 train derailments – eight involving passenger and 20 involving non-passenger trains. One event, the accident at Grayrigg, resulted in one fatality and 11 major injuries. There were no major injuries reported in other events.

Fatalities

The following chart presents the number of fatalities occurring on the railway during 2007, in comparison with previous years.

The chart shows the number of accident fatalities occurring to passengers, the workforce, and members of the public not involved in trespass. The current year shows lower than average numbers of passenger and workforce fatalities and a slightly higher than average number of public non-trespass fatalities, compared with the previous four years.



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Passengers

In addition to the passenger fatality that occurred in the derailment at Grayrigg, six other passengers died in separate incidents at stations:

- One associated with a passenger climbing over the barriers of manually controlled barrier (MCB) level crossing to join a train in the opposite platform and being struck by a train.
- One associated with a child being struck by a train while leaning over the platform edge.
- One fall between the train and the platform.
- One fall from the platform and being struck by a train.
- One fall from a train in service.
- One undetermined cause.

Workforce

There were two workforce fatalities in 2007:

- On 29 April, a track worker was struck and killed by an empty coaching stock train at Ruscombe Junction (Western). It is reported that he failed to respond to horns from the power car and two lookouts.
- On 29 November, a track worker (blockman) was struck by a train at Kennet Bridge near Reading (Western). The incident occurred after the possession was given up in the early hours of the morning.

The Rail Accident Investigation Branch has launched investigations into both accidents.

Members of the public

Eight of the 15 public fatalities not related to trespass or suicide occurred to pedestrians at level crossings. Three others were road vehicle occupants, who died in collisions with trains at level crossings. The remaining four non-trespass fatalities concerned accidents involving the platform edge and occurred to people who were at stations, but not for the purposes of travel.

There were 55 trespass related fatalities and 194 suicides/suspected suicides. The overall total of 249 trespass and suicide fatalities is a reduction on the 286 fatalities recorded in 2006 and shows a return to the levels recorded previously.

Further information

The Safety Intelligence Team are happy to take questions or comments on the information in this overview, or the forthcoming ASPR. Please contact Liz Davies, Safety Intelligence Strategy Manager, with any feedback: liz.davies@rssb.co.uk, tel. 0207 904 7493.