Level crossing deaths at lowest level for nearly a generation

The number of people dying in level crossing accidents is at its lowest recorded level for nearly 20 years, according to the latest annual railway safety statistics released by the industry’s independent safety body today.

Only three pedestrians died in accidents at level crossings in the year between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016, according to RSSB’s Annual Safety Performance Report. In a further indication of Britain’s ranking as the safest of the 10 biggest railways in Europe, the report reveals that there have been no passenger or workforce fatalities in train accidents for a record ninth year in a row.

RSSB’s Director of System Safety, George Bearfield said, “Britain’s railways are not only one of the safest in Europe but also by far the safest form of land transport in this country. Taking the train is 22 times safer than travelling by car and over 1,200 times safer than by motorcycle.”

“The achievements on safety are being made at the same time that record numbers of people are using the railway, and that doesn’t happen automatically. It’s down to a dedicated rail workforce looking after each other, their customers and the wider public combined with our industry’s mature and open approach to incident reporting and sustained efforts by everyone to tackle safety issues in a coordinated way that has delivered the impressive figures we are releasing today,” Dr Bearfield continued.

Other key statistics in the report include:

- 45 people were fatally injured in accidents connected to the railway during the report year:
  - 10 people died in accidents at stations, 6 at the platform edge, 3 in incidents related to assault, and 1 who was struck by a sign in high winds. 2 of the 10 were non-travelling members of the public.
  - 3 members of the public died in accidents at level crossings, all pedestrians, the lowest recorded figure since 1996/7
- 2 members of the public died after falling from height onto railway property
- There were no workforce fatalities
- 30 people were fatally injured while trespassing on the railway

- There has been a marked increase in the number of assaults between passengers – even when normalised for the increase in passenger journeys made, partly driven by better reporting
- There were 252 suicides or suspected suicides, considerably fewer than last year, supported by at least 1,100 interventions by staff to help vulnerable people

“No one is complacent about safety and there are clear areas where risk still needs to be managed; such as on stations, assaults, as well as areas where we simply don’t have good enough data yet, such as health and wellbeing. However, the industry is on top of these issues with programmes of activity to try to bring the risk down, and in time to come, I’m confident we will see improvements,” Dr Bearfield said.

-Ends-

Notes to Editors:
For further information, please contact:
Matt Clements 020 3142 5332/ matt.clements@rssb.co.uk
James Page 020 3142 5655/ james.page@rssb.co.uk

Safe Reporting Guidelines
RSSB asks that reporters refer to the Samaritans’ Media Guidelines for Reporting Suicide if publishing data about trespass and suicide from the report:
About the Annual Safety Performance Report (ASPR)

1. The Annual Safety Performance Report (ASPR) will be available to download from the RSSB website from 1430hrs on Wednesday 13 July, from this address: http://www.rssb.co.uk/risk-analysis-and-safety-reporting/safety-intelligence/safety-performance-reports

2. The Annual Safety Performance Report’s main purpose is to inform those in the industry who manage risk. It is also intended to inform other rail industry employees, passengers, the government (and its agencies) and the public at large. The report is generally limited to events on or affecting stations and Network Rail Managed Infrastructure but also includes data on events in yards, depots and sidings and road-driving risk to on-duty rail staff.

3. The reporting period is 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

4. RSSB’s role includes collecting, monitoring and analysing safety performance and risk data from a range of sources including industry’s own reporting systems. The Annual Safety Performance Report forms a big part of the evidence base that helps RSSB members make good, informed safety-related decisions.

5. The Railway Safety Directive states the requirement for Member States to ensure that safety is generally maintained and, where reasonably practicable, continuously improved. The European Railway Agency (ERA) is mandated to develop Common Safety Targets (CSTs) and National Reference Values (NRVs) to monitor the performance of Member States in this area. These figures show that Britain’s railways are the safest of the 10 largest EU-25 railways, and overall, only Luxembourg and Republic or Ireland have better reference values. Britain’s railways are ranked the safest in the EU-25 on passenger safety and level crossings.

6. A ‘train accident’ is defined as one (or a combination of) the following criteria.
   - Collision between trains
   - Derailment
   - Train fire
   - Train striking road vehicle
   - Open door collision
   - Buffer stop collision
   - Trains running into objects
7. The report uses coroners’ verdicts (where available) as the basis for categorising public fatalities as suicide or accidental. Where a coroner’s verdict is returned as open or narrative, or where it is not yet returned, the industry applies the Ovenstone Criteria to determine the most probable circumstances, ie either trespass or suicide.

About RSSB

Through research, analysis, and insight RSSB supports our members and stakeholders to deliver a safer, more efficient and sustainable rail system.

Our vision is to be a centre of excellence, valued by its members and stakeholders as an essential contributor to their success.

Our independent evidence based approach is built on strong technical capability, and the enabling of collaborative industry engagement for the benefit of the whole rail system.

Our strategic priorities are to support:

• Healthy and safe collaboration and inform industry decisions to reduce risk and harm
• Enhanced performance and efficiency updating standards, modernising systems, informing and enabling innovation
• The application of sustainability principles by collating and sharing tools and best practice

Website: www.rssb.co.uk
Twitter: @RSSB_rail