

Rail Plant Association Update

RPA Management Committee Chair Andy Crago reports on the current initiatives of the association.

The Rail Plant Association (RPA) is very proud of the support it gives its members. A good example of this is the review of changes to key documents to save members time to determine the changes and leave them to undertake impact analysis on how the changes will effect them directly.

The RPA Standards Working Group conducts a review in March, June, September and December noting changes to legislation, RSSB Rule Books, standards and M&EE Networking Group Codes of Practice (COPs). This is in line with Network Rail and RISQS requirements as detailed by the RPA Management Committee. Each document is checked for any new issues, withdrawals, derogations, etc.

The Catalogue of Network Rail Standards (NR-CAT-STP-001), Standards and Controls Change Summary Report (NRS-SBR001) and the RSSB Standards Catalogue are reviewed to determine if any changes will have an effect on RPA Members.

Where changes are noted, the RPA standards legislation update summarises the changes and the notes can be used, before reading the complete standard, to see if it is applicable to RPA members. The RPA standards legislation update is published on the RPA website and lists the changes to legislation, Rule Books and Network Rail standards. M&EE COPs and posters that are newly issued, that have been amended since the last update or that are required to be



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complied with before the next standards review are listed. The RPA standards legislation update also includes Network Rail Safety Bulletins, relevant Industry Technical Bulletins, Rail PPS and Shared with Pain/Pride from the previous three months.

Guidance to members

Another area the RPA supports its members is to provide guidance. The Publications Review Group is reviewing RPA Guidance Documents 'Good Practice Guide for Haulier Competence' and 'The Good Practice Guide for Security of OTP and Attachments for Haulage'. These will be amalgamated to produce one document, which will also include 'Guidance on Working at Height'. One reason for this is that the 'Safety of loads on vehicles: Code of Practice' and 'Load securing: vehicle operator guidance' has now been replaced by the 'Securing loads on HGVs and goods vehicles', which is available on the website <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/securing-loads-on-hgvs-and-goods-vehicles>. There is additional guidance on the Construction Plant Association website for its members.



Andy Crago, Management Committee Chair, RPA.

Driving handbook

As mentioned in a previous article, the RPA has been working with the M&EE Networking Group, to develop an On-Track Plant (OTP) operator professional driving handbook, following a review of the Ramsden Bellhouse collision. It is recognised that when an OTP operator is trained to drive OTP in travelling mode, the lack of access to steep gradients and areas of low adhesion is an issue and the handbook is designed to help support trainers, operators and planners on what

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In any control period, there is funding to undertake the development of the next Control Period (CP). When Network Rail hit the brakes on spending in the last year of CP6, some of the reductions were on the CP7 development funding so we started CP7 behind where we should have been, in some instances, and are now playing catch-up.

Often, as control periods change, so the delivery contracts are retendered. There has been a lot of change in the contractors responsible for the design and work delivery. This has led to a slow down of the workload conveyors while the new contractors get up to speed and get their teams fully established. A combination of headcount reductions and holidays have also contributed to it taking longer than it would have done historically to get things signed off for delivery. This has also contributed to the workload conveyor slow down. All of the above will correct themselves given time and the workload conveyors will pick up speed as we progress through CP7. But, in the meantime, the supply chain will have to continue to survive on reduced rations.

As usual, the Christmas work volumes show a significant peak compared to any other time of the year. After 18 months of reduced work volumes, there is a significant risk that the supply chain could struggle to have sufficient resources to deliver the Christmas programme. Network Rail asked the plant supply chain to have named resources in place in time for the T minus 4

week reviews towards the end of November.

The latest RPA Leadership meeting took place on 5th November where we discussed the latest Christmas plans with Network Rail's directors.

On 16th September, I joined the RPA senior team at a meeting with the Department for Transport (DfT) to discuss a category strategy for plant across all of the Department's arm's length bodies including National Highways, Network Rail, Transport for London and HS2. It was a great opportunity to discuss the importance of a steady pipeline of work as this will provide the best value for taxpayers rather than the boom and bust cycles of work that we have become used to. The discussion about signals from government for companies to make key plant purchasing decisions and recruitment and training decisions was very useful.

Finally, the journey of plant to carbon neutral by 2050 was discussed along with the importance of a roadmap so that residual plant values can be assessed and factored into investment decisions. The RPA will continue discussions and hope to play an active role supporting this important DfT work. The next meeting was scheduled for 3rd December.

One of the concerning points made by the DfT was that the government are likely to pause the development of some of the enhancement projects while it undertakes a spending review. I think that it is important that key decision makers understand that many enhancements projects are actually

asset renewals in disguise. For example, a line speed improvement project generally involves the renewal of lots of track and S&C which is approaching the end of its life. By delaying such enhancements then the average age of the railway infrastructure increases, the risk of asset failure increases and the performance of the railway reduces.

Hopefully, both Network Rail and the regulatory authorities will keep a close eye on the average asset age as we progress through a potential period of austerity on the railway, particularly in regard to the unintended consequences of delays to enhancement projects.

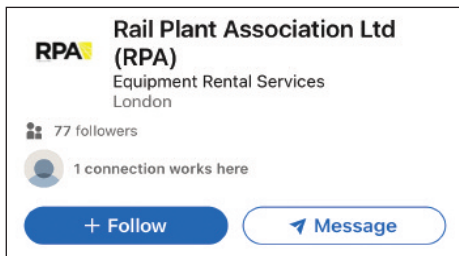


Steve Featherstone, RPA Consultant.

to consider. This includes errors and driving techniques to help improve operatives driving in these high-risk areas. So far, three meetings have been undertaken and the document is close to being finalised. It will then will be sent out for consultation before publication.

LinkedIn page

The RPA management committee is continually looking at how membership engagement can be developed and earlier this year the Association set up a dedicated LinkedIn page - Rail Plant Association Ltd (RPA) - as pictured below left. This will be used more regularly to update members and those interested in OTP



of any industry developments.

Unauthorised access

At the last RPA management committee meeting number 193, there was a discussion around how to prevent unauthorised access, of those without the required competence, to operate OTP. One of the members' machines are fitted with a system which prevents unauthorised access. This system is a numbered keypad on which the operator is required to enter their Sentinel number. If they do not hold the appropriate competence then the equipment will remain inhibited. The system also provides:

- Real-time GPS location tracking.
- Data analysis (speed, emissions, etc).
- Register of faults.
- Monitoring of the machine's condition.

Data loggers have been fitted to OTP since RIS-1530-PLT issue 2 was introduced and they provide a lot of information to help carry out surveillance, enable a review of a lifting operation compared to the lift plan or ALO plan, as well as post-incident. Following analysis, it has been recognised that there is

an industry problem with operators entering false Sentinel numbers to hide their real identity. Even without the competence controls now in place for some members as stated above, it is easy to identify who was operating the machine at that specific time. This is an area of focus, and it will become harder for incorrect data to be entered going forward.

RPA 25th anniversary

Next year, the RPA is celebrating the 25th anniversary since its formation. As part of this, it will be hosting a 25th anniversary dinner for the association's membership on the evening of 25th February 2025. This is also the night before the RPA Annual General Meeting and the next RPA Leadership Meeting which will be held on 26th February 2025. The venue for the 25th anniversary dinner and meetings the next day will be the Best Western Plus Birmingham NEC Meriden Manor Hotel, Main Road, Meriden, CV7 7NH. The RPA has a limited number of hotel rooms allocated at the venue at a reduced rate. For further details, please email: rpa@cpa.uk.net