

NOTICE BOARD

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Issue 1
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NETWORK RAIL - SIGNAL ENGINEERING Requirements for Whistle Boards

Purpose

To provide guidance on the policy for provision of Whistle Boards at level crossings where users employ the "Stop, Look and Listen" procedure.

Scope

Applies to the requirements that are set for passive level crossings, including those that currently employ whistle boards to aid the "Stop, Look and Listen" procedure.

Applies to Route Asset Managers who specify requirements for user operation methods at passive level crossings and to those who may conduct risk assessments on such crossings (including Level Crossing Managers).

Background

The fatal incident involving a pedestrian at Mexico crossing near Penzance resulted in a wide ranging set of recommendations around pedestrian warnings. In particular, [Recommendation 5](#) recommended that "Network Rail should conduct a review of the arrangements for providing warnings for pedestrians at level crossings currently equipped with whistle boards." The usage of whistle boards by train crew is itself not reliable since the hours of operation are now restricted by the Rule Book. Even when permitted, usage of the whistle board relies on the train driver taking action as part of duties required to drive the train, and the user identifying the train from the sound of the train horn as an aid to their action of "Stop, Look and Listen". There are many other challenges to the effectiveness of whistle boards that are outside of the control of the railway, including vehicle engine noise at user worked crossings, the weather and climate, distractions to users such as headphones.

Whilst there has not been a blanket ruling from either inside or outside of Network Rail on whistle board provision following the incident at Mexico crossing, Network Rail is now reassessing the requirements for whistle board provision. This is partly in response to queries raised from those who need to specify them or risk assess crossings that have them.

Provision Criteria for Whistle Boards

Where an upgrade in the provision of warning is required on an existing level crossing without whistle boards, it is not acceptable to specify new provision of whistle boards.

New provision of whistle boards should be limited to crossings which already employ these, on occasion when trains may operate on a line or in a direction that was not previously available.

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However, should such occasions arise, alternative level crossing configurations should be considered more desirable.

Alternatives to Whistle Boards

The COVTEC AWD product may be used to supplement existing whistle boards (but cannot be used to replace them or without them). It has been product accepted (certificate number PA05/05908), but it is emphasised the criteria for its use is limited. Design requirements to supplement the Product Acceptance certificate will be published via the Standards Management website in due course.

An alternative is to provide crossings with miniature red/green lights (MSL). These crossings are classed either as **Integrated MSL** (design criteria set within standard [NR/L2/SIG/11201/ModX40](#)) or as an **Overlay MSL** (design criteria within standard [NR/L2/SIG/11201/ModX39](#), product requirements in [NR/SPEC/1003](#)). Both types of level crossing require train detection equipment to drive two states of indication – red lights and an audible warning of a train approaching, green and no audible warning when it is safe to cross.

Action Required

- Routes should not specify whistle boards for any level crossing that does not currently have them.
- Renewal of whistle boards should be limited to crossings that already use whistle boards.
- Where the configuration of the railway changes, Routes should investigate the opportunity to remove whistle boards and replace them with an automatic warning system such as the MSL crossings.

Staff to be Briefed

Role	Responsible for Briefing
Head of Level Crossing Safety	Author
Head of Level Crossing Engineering	Author
Route Asset Managers [Track]	Head of Level Crossing Safety
Route Asset Managers [S&T]	Head of Level Crossing Engineering
Level Crossing Managers, Route Level Crossing Managers/Operations Risk Advisors	Head of Level Crossing Safety
Signalling Designers	Head of Level Crossing Engineering
Operations Principles Specialist (Network Operations), Network Operations	Author

End