

Rules on walking on or near the line

15/11/2024

Revised rules on walking on or near the line for trackworkers come into effect on the 7 December 2024. These rules have been updated to provide clarity and improve the safety of all personnel. These revised rules outline who, where and for what reason it is permitted to walk on or near the line, including crossing open lines.

These revisions aim to provide:

1. Clear definitions of when walking on or near the line is permitted and for what reasons.
2. Define the extent to which walking is allowed based on different competencies.
3. Permitted procedures for crossing lines open to traffic while walking.

Please familiarise yourself with the revisions set out below. These are designed to protect your safety and improve the efficiency of operations.

Walking with others

Going on or near the line with others is only allowed if a COSS has given a briefing on the walking component shown in the COSS's safe work pack.

Obstacles and obstructions

If a COSS or IWA faces an unexpected obstacle or obstruction that requires them to walk on or near an open line, they must consider these three options in order of preference:

- Find an alternative route that avoids going on or near the line.
- Carry out an arrangement from the company instructions that does not require a line blockage.
- Arrange a line blockage.

A COSS must do the same if walking with a group.

If joining or leaving a group, the COSS must be asked for further instructions.

Crossing Lines

Lines open to traffic can only be crossed if:

- The safe work pack shows where the lines are to be crossed and under what arrangements.
- The IWA or COSS is competent to use the crossing the line procedure at that location.
- The IWA or COSS is competent to use a planned crossing point.
- The COSS has briefed the group on what is to happen.

Learn more about the changes to 'Walking on or near the line' through seven example animated scenarios videos prepared by RSSB and Network Rail's Technical Authority.

Scenario 1

A work group are working within a fenced area undertaking routine work to clear foliage

Scenario 2

Permanent Way team access to site of work

Scenario 3

Team access to site of work, limited clearance in walking route

Scenario 4

S&T Team access to a relay room and then onto a location cabinet

Scenario 5

Team access to site of work, with a found obstruction on the walking route

Scenario 6

Team running a cable from a relay room to a location cabinet

Scenario 7

Team installing troughing

Walking on or near the line: Rule Book briefing slides December 2024

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Learn more about these updates

Access the Rulebook handbooks for detailed insights into these changes.

Rule Book Handbook 1

General duties and track safety for track workers

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Rule Book Handbook 6

General duties of an individual working alone (IWA)

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General duties of a controller of site safety (COSS)

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- For more information refer to the interactive Rule Book briefing presentation.
[Download the presentation >](#)
- Learn more in our latest Standards Quarterly webinar.
[Standards Quarterly Webinar - September 2024 >](#)
- Explore other updates to standards published in the September 2024.
[Visit the page for more information >](#)

Key considerations for the planning of infrastructure work

The rules are based on the application of a safe systems of work available to a COSS or IWA. They allow a company to develop alternatives, which must be subject to suitable and sufficient risk assessment in the following circumstances:

- An IWA or COSS walking alone has to bypass an unexpected obstacle or obstruction by going closer to a line open to traffic, without taking a line blockage.
- A COSS with a group has to bypass an unexpected obstacle or obstruction by going closer to a line open to traffic, without taking a line blockage.
- Someone not competent as an IWA or COSS has to walk on or near the line to reach a site of work or return from it.

However, the arrangements cannot rely on the use of site wardens as described in the Rule Book, as these are based on a static and identifiable site of work. The use of lookouts is only permitted if this has been specifically authorised.

Guidance on arrangements that might be adopted in certain situations is provided, but these can only be adopted if suitably and sufficiently risk assessed. Network Rail has provided supporting guidance for these risk assessments.