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This circular is	For guidance	No response required	
This circular is	Not relevant to the National Framework		
Status	This guidance should be incorporated into Standard Operating Plans for use at incidents involving flooding on railways.		

Flooding on or near the Railway Infrastructure

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Addressed to:

The Chief Fire Officer
**The Commissioner of the London Fire and
Emergency Planning Authority**

Please forward to:

Operational Policy Writers

Summary

This Circular provides advice and guidance for incidents involving flooding on or near the railway infrastructure.

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 As a consequence of the recent adverse weather, there have been many instances of flooding around the country. Many of these have affected the railway infrastructure and some have resulted in tracks being undermined by flowing water.

2.0 Information & Guidance

- 2.1 Most rail track beds are made up of granite ballast on which the sleepers are placed onto the rails, which are affixed. The track is tamped down and this forms a stable foundation on which to run trains. Drainage forms an important component of the infrastructure to avoid the risk of “wash away” and the track is constantly monitored by Permanent Way staff, particularly during heavy rain. The criteria applied on the railway is that if any report is received of running water on or near the track, all traffic is stopped as a precaution until such time as it is inspected and passed fit for purpose.
- 2.2 A serious consequence of flooding can be movement in the track, which can cause distortion to the rails and could result in a derailment.
- 2.3 On many occasions, flooding incidents require the attendance of the Fire and Rescue Service and it has been highlighted by Network Rail that there have been occasions recently, when water has been inadvertently pumped from flooded streets and/or property onto the railway infrastructure. As you will appreciate, this practice could have serious safety implications. It is therefore imperative that all fire and rescue service personnel likely to attend such incidents, are aware of the potential consequences of flooding affecting railway infrastructure and to ensure that the actions of the Fire and Rescue Service do not compromise the safety of the rail infrastructure.
- 2.4 It is also important to note that that the practice of allowing copious amounts of water to flush down embankments is also dangerous. This will undermine the terrain and could result in landslip. Should this happen ahead of an oncoming train or road traffic the consequences could be disastrous. As recent events have shown, landslip can happen suddenly and without warning and crews should be made aware of this.
- 2.5 Whilst attending such incidents, should the Fire and Rescue Service become aware of any of the aforementioned circumstances, they must ensure that the Network Rail Operations Control Room for the area in which the affected railway is located is advised immediately. Network Rail will then be able to take the appropriate action to safeguard their operations and public safety.

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