



## **Train horns – November 2003 progress update**

This is the fourth briefing note provided for residents, local authorities, MPs and interested parties, on progress towards solving the problems caused by noise from train horns.

### **Research**

The results of the tests of the broad band sound technology (ie using a very wide range of sound frequencies) are still being analysed. AEA Technology, who are carrying out the wider research on behalf of RSSB, are comparing the two types of horn (new and existing) recorded on 25 October 2003.

### **Rules**

#### **Level crossings**

From 6 December 2003, the requirement will be removed for drivers to sound the horn when a train moves away from a station approaching a level crossing with a full barrier or gates.

#### **Stations**

At the same time, the opportunity has also been taken to remove the requirement for drivers to sound the horn when approaching a station when there is another train standing on an adjacent line. The purpose of this rule is now obsolete.

In both these instances, it is important to remember that if the driver sees anyone on or near the line, the horn remains an essential additional warning and he/she is quite within their rights to use it.

#### **Tunnels**

The proposed change to the rules about using the horn entering and leaving tunnels is to be consulted within the rail industry, as required by the Rail Regulator. The proposal seeks to address the concerns of train drivers who experience difficulty adjusting their vision from dark to light when leaving long tunnels. It is proposed that it will no longer be necessary to use the horn when entering tunnels but there will still be a requirement to use it when approaching the exit from a long tunnel, in daylight only. The horn will, under this proposal, be used inside the tunnel, which should reduce the noise heard by residents living near the tunnel. Subject to the results of the consultation, it is intended to change the rules from June 2004.

Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) will review the effects of the change after implementation. **The views of readers on this proposal are welcome.** Please write or e-mail your views to Phillipa Brown (contact details below).

### **Footpath crossings**

There is little progress to report on this source of train horn noise. Closure of individual crossings is a matter for Network Rail, the Local Authority and local residents.

RSSB will initiate discussions in the new year with Network Rail, train operators and the HSE (who lay down the Railway Safety Principles which have resulted in 'whistle' boards at some footpath crossings) to see if there is scope for dealing with a sequence of crossings close together with one use of the horn.

The need for a whistle board at a footpath crossing is based on the warning time (the time it takes for the fastest train on that line to reach the crossing from the point at which it becomes visible to a user) and the crossing time (the time taken for someone to decide to walk across, complete the crossing and reach a place of safety, making allowances for foreseeable use by people of impaired mobility or where prams or cycles may be pushed across). If the warning time is less than five seconds more than the crossing time, a whistle board must be provided in both directions from which trains approach.

There are some footpath crossings where the warning time is less than two seconds more than the crossing time.

### **Drivers' use of the horn**

Regrettably, there is evidence from residents, railway staff and other sources that some train drivers use the horn more than is necessary. RSSB will be reminding train operators of the distress this causes, particularly at a time when the industry is working to reduce noise nuisance to its neighbours.

### **Next issue**

The next briefing note will be issued in late January 2004. Meanwhile, all the team at RSSB would like to extend their best wishes for a happy festive season and a joyful new year.

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