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**Guidance on Recording and Monitoring of Spoken Safety**  
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# Guidance on Recording and Monitoring of Spoken Safety Communications

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## Superseded documents

This Railway Group Guidance Note does not supersede any other Railway Group documents.

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# Guidance on Recording and Monitoring of Spoken Safety Communications

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# Guidance on Recording and Monitoring of Spoken Safety Communications

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## Part 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose of this document

- 1.1.1 The benefits arising from recording spoken safety communications were identified in the Uff Inquiry, where Recommendation 19 stated that 'Appropriate procedures for receiving and making an automatic record of verbal reports should exist in all control centres'. Since 1998 the use of recording equipment as a means of evidence preservation in the event of an incident has become widespread in signal boxes and control centres. Further benefits have been the ability to use voice recording equipment as a key element within competency management systems, and the development of joint monitoring exercises between infrastructure managers and railway undertakings, with the objective of raising standards in verbal communication. This is particularly important where safety critical staff are giving and receiving safety messages.
- 1.1.2 This guidance document is therefore intended to assist infrastructure managers and railway undertakings in understanding and meeting their responsibilities in relation to the recording and monitoring of spoken safety communications, ie to:
- a) monitor and review spoken safety communications to ensure that the required standards of communication are achieved
  - b) collect and preserve voice recording evidence following an accident or incident.

It does not constitute a recommended method of meeting any set of mandatory requirements.

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### 1.3 Approval and authorisation of this document

The content of this document has been approved by:

TOM Standards Committee on 29 April 2008.

This document has been authorised by RSSB on 18 June 2008.

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## **Part 2            Guidance on Recording and Monitoring of Spoken Safety Communications**

### **2.1            Guidance to infrastructure managers and railway undertakings on routine monitoring of spoken safety communications**

#### **2.1.1        General arrangements for access to recordings**

- 2.1.1.1    Infrastructure managers and railway undertakings should compile lists of all locations where voice recording equipment is installed, and share this information with each other to facilitate joint monitoring.
- 2.1.1.2    Infrastructure managers and railway undertakings should make access to voice recordings available to nominated representatives from other such organisations upon reasonable request and subject to reasonable notice being given.
- 2.1.1.3    Consideration should be given to developing and documenting contingency arrangements to ensure that voice recording of spoken safety communications can be maintained in cases where the normal recording media is not available, for example arising from planned or emergency relocation of signalling and control centres.

#### **2.1.2        Monitoring of individuals**

- 2.1.2.1    Nominated managers should establish plans to monitor voice recordings of staff required to undertake spoken safety communications. Appendix A provides information on how assessments may be carried out, and includes a template monitoring form listing suggested criteria against which monitoring and assessment may take place.
- 2.1.2.2    Planned monitoring of each individual carrying out safety critical tasks should be carried out at least once in every competency assessment cycle. Where an individual is assessed as being at greater risk, for example those newly appointed or with a history of poor quality communication, more frequent monitoring should be considered.
- 2.1.2.3    Voice media evidence of this assessment should be retained until a new competency assessment cycle begins.
- 2.1.2.4    This proactive monitoring may use information from a number of different sources and should include both announced and unannounced monitoring.
  - a) Announced monitoring should consider:
    - i) workplace visits
    - ii) analysis of voice recordings.

The effect of the presence of an assessor on spoken safety communication behaviours should be considered.

- b) Unannounced monitoring should consider the analysis of voice recordings or the monitoring of radio channels, where this is possible.

Information from both sources should be used to support competence assessments.

- 2.1.2.5    Particular attention should be paid to the spoken safety communications performance of new staff, utilising announced and unannounced monitoring. It is important that any deviations from training and competence models are identified as soon as possible to reduce the likelihood of perpetuating communications errors. Therefore it is suggested that additional assessments are conducted on new staff.

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- 2.1.2.6 Constructive feedback should always be given to individuals following assessment. Where communications protocols have not been followed (such as establishing lead responsibility), or there has been a failure to reach a clear understanding, an action plan for the individual should be agreed.
  - 2.1.2.7 The action plan should be agreed between the individual and the nominated manager and included as part of the competency record. Corrective actions could include:
    - a) additional training and briefing
    - b) additional monitoring and assessment
    - c) use of a simulator as part of a training or assessment action plan
    - d) coaching or mentoring in the workplace
    - e) development and use of job aids to remind the individual how communication should be conducted.
  - 2.1.2.8 When, during monitoring of voice recordings where safety messages are being exchanged, the nominated manager notes substandard communication behaviour by an employee of another infrastructure manager or railway undertaking, the organisation concerned should be advised.
- 2.1.3 Review of individual monitoring**
- 2.1.3.1 Arrangements should be in place to monitor the quality of assessments carried out by the nominated manager, at a frequency based on the perceived risk.
  - 2.1.3.2 The review should monitor the standard of assessment of spoken safety communications, using a sample of the assessments and voice recordings that have been assessed by each nominated manager.
  - 2.1.3.3 Feedback on the standard of assessments and quality of documentation should be given to the nominated manager following each review. This may include provision of additional guidance, coaching and training.
- 2.1.4 Joint communications monitoring**
- 2.1.4.1 Infrastructure managers and railway undertakings should work together on a systematic basis to conduct joint monitoring of spoken safety communications.
- 2.1.5 Review of joint communications monitoring**
- 2.1.5.1 Infrastructure managers and railway undertakings should work together in structured communications review groups to:
    - a) monitor the general quality of spoken safety communications in voice recordings
    - b) identify and share good practice
    - b) identify areas for improvement
    - c) set targets for the improvement of spoken safety communications
    - d) review overall trends and progress against targets.
  - 2.1.5.2 Possible trends that could be analysed include:
    - a) type of communications failures, eg communicating an incomplete message, or identifying the root cause of the failures

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- b) occupation and grade of staff involved
- c) environmental factors associated with communications
- d) technology in use at time of the communication failure.

2.1.5.3 Reports summarising the outcome of structured communications reviews should be produced by the communications review groups and shared between infrastructure managers and railway undertakings for mutual benefit.

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## **2.2 Guidance to infrastructure managers and railway undertakings on post-incident monitoring of spoken safety communications**

### **2.2.1 Post-incident monitoring**

- 2.2.1 Infrastructure managers and railway undertakings should define and document the circumstances under which a voice recording is to be withdrawn for the purposes of identification, collection and preservation of information, and obtaining evidence to assist investigation.
- 2.2.2 Where voice recording equipment is installed in signal boxes and control offices, infrastructure managers and railway undertakings should arrange that:
  - a) nominated managers competent in the use of the recording equipment are identified to withdraw voice recording evidence
  - b) an individual involved in an incident, whether directly or indirectly, is not required to withdraw any associated voice recordings
  - c) once withdrawn, voice recordings are kept in a secure location until required by the industry lead investigator, RAIB investigator or other authorised agency.
- 2.2.3 Anyone appointed to conduct a review of the voice recording withdrawn for the purposes of investigation, should be competent to do so and should not be involved in the alleged incident in any way.
- 2.2.4 Arrangements should be made for voice recording media that has been used in the investigation of an accident or incident to be retained with the investigation report in accordance with RIDDOR requirements.

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### Appendix A Spoken safety communications monitoring form

#### A.1 Completing the monitoring form

- A.1.1 This appendix provides information on how assessments of spoken safety communications may be carried out. The form provides a suggested format for the scoring methodology and for documenting the results of the assessment.
- A.1.2 Space is provided to record the results from monitoring six conversations. A judgement about whether this is sufficient to identify whether the standards are being applied consistently across all the categories will need to be made, depending on the outcome from these six conversations. Additional forms may therefore need to be used either to obtain further evidence of consistency, or to identify where a particular individual or category is deficient and requires development.
- A.1.3 The details of the conversation should be entered in Section A to identify the other party and the nature of the activity about which they were communicating.
- A.1.4 When reviewing each conversation a score (from A – E) should be given against each communications category. The scores are as follows:

Score	Rating	Description
A	Very good	All of the communications protocols have been followed. The communication was concise, polite and a clear understanding was reached.
B	Good	The individual(s) reached a clear understanding and followed the majority of the protocols including taking lead responsibility.
C	Satisfactory	The individual(s) reached a clear understanding and followed the majority of the protocols concerning starting the communication correctly and ensuring the message was understood through the use of repeat backs.
D	Poor	Some attempt to use the protocols but with significant variations and with a possibility of misunderstandings occurring.
E	Very poor	No attempt has been made to use the communications protocols. Likelihood of misunderstandings occurring very high.

**Table 1 Scoring criteria**

- A.1.5 The score in Section B under the Plans Communication category should be entered where the person being assessed has instigated the conversation and has had the opportunity to plan what needs to be communicated, for example when stopping and cautioning trains, when authorising a driver to pass a signal at danger or when granting possessions. It is included as the last category because it may not be until the end of the conversation that a judgement can be made as to the degree to which it was planned.

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## Section A: Background information

<b>Name of assessor:</b>	<b>Designation of assessor:</b>
<b>Name of individual being assessed:</b>	<b>Post title and location of individual:</b>
<b>Date of monitoring:</b>	

## Details of conversations monitored

	Channel	Time	Date	Parties*	Purpose
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
* Both the names and the roles (eg driver, signaller, PICOP) of the parties should be recorded.					

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### Section B: Monitoring categories

**Note:** The bullet points shown within each category below are provided as guidance to the type of protocols that should be adopted. They do not need to be scored separately as they may not all be relevant for every conversation.

Communications category	Conversation no.					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p><b>Commences communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies own name (where appropriate), job title &amp; location from which speaking</li> <li>• Finds out who the other party is, their location and job title</li> <li>• Confirms that the correct person is receiving the communication</li> <li>• Ensures that contact details are exchanged, where appropriate</li> </ul>						
<p><b>Structures communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies the purpose or context of the communication (eg taking a possession)</li> <li>• Includes key information as defined in the Rule Book and from knowledge of the situation</li> <li>• Information is exchanged in an appropriate sequence of events</li> <li>• Conversation has a logical structure so that the information flows</li> <li>• Speaks concisely and to the point without superfluous chat</li> <li>• Actively listens to the information being provided</li> <li>• Responds constructively to questions</li> <li>• Summarises information where appropriate to aid understanding</li> </ul>						
<p><b>Speaks professionally</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not use any jargon, slang or local terminology</li> <li>• Uses the phonetic alphabet appropriately (eg when quoting train descriptions, signal numbers etc)</li> <li>• Speaks numbers singly, as appropriate</li> <li>• Conveys times in the 24 hour clock format</li> <li>• Uses standard phrases as appropriate</li> <li>• Speaks politely and assertively</li> <li>• Speaks slowly and clearly</li> </ul>						

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Communications category	Conversation no.					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p><b>Demonstrates lead responsibility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses the appropriate protocols throughout the conversation</li> <li>• Challenges others poor communication style</li> <li>• Clarifies any jargon, slang or local terminology</li> <li>• Asks questions to ensure all relevant information is obtained so that the appropriate course of action can be identified</li> <li>• Answers questions with an appropriate and timely response</li> <li>• Calms people and extracts good communication from people who may be in a state of panic or stress</li> <li>• Repeats back all critical details</li> <li>• Asks the other party to repeat back their message</li> <li>• Only concludes the communication when certain a clear understanding has been reached as to the information provided or the course of action to be taken</li> <li>• Takes time to make sure the message is understood</li> </ul>						
<p><b>Concludes communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repeats back all crucial information in a timely manner during the communication or at the end of the communication</li> <li>• As the receiver of the feedback, listens carefully for errors</li> <li>• Corrects any errors or inconsistencies</li> <li>• Confirms that a clear understanding has been reached as to the current situation and/or on the action that should be taken as a result of the communication</li> </ul>						
<p><b>Plans communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correctly assessed the situation and set up the appropriate communication link</li> <li>• Recognised what needed to be communicated, when and any associated actions</li> <li>• Prepared documentation to support communications, as appropriate</li> <li>• Selected the right person to whom to relay the message</li> </ul>						

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### Section C Feedback and development plans

If an individual has scored less than C on any of the communications categories or an individual has moved down the scale, from C to D or E, then a development plan should be agreed.

Conversation	Feedback / Action Plan
1	

Conversation	Feedback / Action Plan
2	

Conversation	Feedback / Action Plan
3	

Conversation	Feedback / Action Plan
4	

Conversation	Feedback / Action Plan
5	

Conversation	Feedback / Action Plan
6	

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## Definitions

### **Infrastructure manager**

“infrastructure manager” means a person who –

(a) in relation to infrastructure other than a station, is responsible for developing and maintaining that infrastructure or, in relation to a station, the person who is responsible for managing and operating that station, except that it shall not include any person solely on the basis that he carries out the construction of that infrastructure or station or its maintenance, repair or alteration; and

(b) manages and uses that infrastructure or station, or permits it to be used, for the operation of a vehicle.”

*(Note: This definition sourced from The Railways and Other Guided Transport Systems (Safety) Regulations 2006)*

### **Nominated manager**

The manager responsible for monitoring the quality of spoken safety communications for designated safety critical staff. This may be a line manager or dedicated competence assessor, who should be familiar with the activities for which recorded conversations are being monitored, and qualified in competence assessment.

### **Railway undertaking**

A transport undertaking, as defined in the Railways and Other Guided Systems Regulations 2006, whose safety certification covers operation of trains on the managed infrastructure, as defined in the Railway Group Standards Code.

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## References

The Catalogue of Railway Group Standards and the Railway Group Standards CD-ROM give the current issue number and status of documents published by RSSB. This information is also available from [www.rgsonline.co.uk](http://www.rgsonline.co.uk).

## Documents referenced in the text

RGSC 01                      The Railway Group Standards Code

### **Railway Group Standards**

GE/RT8046                  Spoken safety communications

## Other relevant documents

### **Other references**

Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995