



ASSOCIATION OF TOURIST & HERITAGE RAIL AUSTRALIA

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ATHRA ALERT #35 – July 2007 **Fatal Accident Report – UK Heritage Railway July 2006**

The UK Rail Accident Investigation Branch (RAIB) recently released its report into a July 2006 shunting accident on the Gwili Railway, Wales, which resulted in the death of a volunteer guard. The person became trapped between two carriages as they were being coupled together at Bronwydd Arms station. The RAIB report (36 pages) can be accessed at: http://www.raib.gov.uk/publications/investigation_reports/reports_2007/report222007.cfm

The report lists the immediate causes and contributory factors as:

- A misunderstanding of the shunting hand signals between the driver and fireman.
- The guard stepping into the gap between the carriages to undertake a task in the belief that they would not move.
- The guard had acted as the shunter earlier and may have had the impression that he retained this responsibility.
- The fireman when taking over the duties of shunter, had not positively advised the guard and received acknowledgement.
- Lack of operational supervision on the day.
- A custom and practice of volunteers multi-tasking and helping each other in safety critical activities without coming to a clear understanding of their limits.

Key Messages:

- The inherent dangers in our activities, in particular shunting rollingstock, must never be under-estimated.
- Clear communication between workers is vital especially who is in control of shunting movements.
- Hand signals must be clearly given and consistently in accordance with the railway's rules and that variations in use should not be allowed to creep in over time.

Recommended Actions:

- The RAIB Report should be read by all members and workers at your railway or tramway regardless of their position.
- Every rail operator should review their procedures for the allocation of shunting duties with a particular emphasis on communicating any changes of duty to all people involved.
- A review of hand signalling practices should be undertaken at each railway to ensure that they are compliant with the railway's documented rules and procedures.