



Protect your job – play it safe

If you value your job, then you need to read this article. If you're not worried about being stitched up and sacked by the company, then don't bother.

OSN101 and other dodgy practices

In recent times, there have been many changes to rules and regulations, most of which seem to be more concerned with keeping the service moving than with staff and passenger safety. For example, OSN101 which introduces practices such as reversing your train without changing ends, a practice which, until now, would have resulted in your dismissal. There has also been a big recategorisation of platforms with many formerly Cat A platforms on the offside of the train being changed to Cat B. This, of course, allows drivers to self-dispatch in the event of defective mirrors or monitors despite being unable to see the whole platform at the point of departure.

Now, you are not in danger of being dismissed if you carry out these new rules. However, they do represent a lowering of safety standards which is why our union successfully balloted all driver members last year for action short of a strike to oppose these changes. **Therefore, if you carry out the previous safer procedures, any attempt by management to discipline you for not carrying out the new rules can be resisted on the grounds that you are taking lawful action short of a strike.**

These new rules also threaten the jobs of station staff. The latest example of management thinking on this issue is at

Queens Park on the Bakerloo line where the company has got rid of station staff and told drivers that they must no longer detrain properly before departing for the sidings – instead they must make three announcements and then close the doors from the cab and go (“flash and dash”). Since this ‘procedure’ was brought in, there have been thousands of passenger overcarries, including one where a 12-year old boy was nearly killed after getting out of a train and walking along the track from the sidings. But drivers there are fighting back: both RMT and ASLEF members have voted ‘YES’ to action short of a strike over this issue and are now lawfully refusing to carry out the new rule. Instead, they are all physically detraining using the porter buttons and causing massive blocking back and train cancellations on the line, a fact which LU management are dishonestly keeping from the public. **Since the action there have been no overcarries.** The pressure is on LU to bring back the station staff at Queens Park. Take note – **action is the only way forward when the company refuses to listen to sense.**

Rules which don't exist

So far, we have dealt with new rules recently brought in by the company. Although some of them are clearly unacceptable, at least they exist and you couldn't be sacked for following them. However, something more insidious is also going on. A notice was recently sellotaped (yes, sellotaped!) to the

booking-on desk. It contained advice about driving in inclement weather. It was not signed by a named person, but had 'Piccadilly Line Team' printed at the bottom. It was not properly headed. It was not in the notice case. (All causes for concern.) Amongst the advice was a paragraph stating that the Service Controller could instruct you to reverse a car's length in the event that your train stalls in icy conditions. There was no reference to any rule – *unsurprising because there isn't one*. Yes, OSN101 states that a train may be set back by up to a car's length, **but only in the event of a platform overrun or a SPAD**. So who are the mystery managers putting out incorrect and potentially dangerous information to drivers? More importantly, what would happen if you carried out a non-existent procedure and something went wrong? We'll give you a clue: **it's your train, your responsibility, your job**. (NB. The correct procedure here, of course, is ice-scraping, a procedure which perhaps takes too long for the liking of our mystery managers.)

When is a danger signal not a danger signal?

An Arnos driver recently stopped at a signal showing no aspect, informed the Service Controller and applied the rule. At the previous station, he had noticed a message written on the passenger service notice board saying that this signal had no green aspect due to a blown bulb. Having applied the rule, he was then questioned as to why he was in slow speed before reaching the second stop signal showing a clear aspect and was later asked for a memo.

So, were his actions correct? Absolutely. Which is why, despite the pressure to treat the signal as green and drive at full speed, he has not been reprimanded in any way and continues to drive. Here are the issues. Firstly, the passenger information boards *must not* be used to display safety critical information. Secondly, it makes no difference *why* there is no aspect on a signal. Finally, whether or not you get tripped is also totally irrelevant. The fact is that *no aspect equals danger* and the proper procedure should be carried out. The signal in question was not relamped for a considerable period of time, during which many drivers ignored correct procedure by passing the signal at line speed. **Be aware that if you do not treat a signal with no aspect exactly as you would a signal with a red, you risk ending up at the job centre.**

What to do

The sum total of all of this is that the company wants to cut staffing to the bone, but some of the previous procedures require the assistance of station staff whom the company wishes to get rid of. How inconvenient! Hence the move towards less safe procedures so as to keep the service moving no matter what. Hence, also, the pressure on drivers to take short cuts for the same reason. Be aware that when you take a short cut you may end up being sacked for your trouble. So don't be a mug; resist any pressure to cut corners and do your job right. **And if you believe in a safe and fully staffed Underground, resist OSN101 and follow the original rules.**

Boxing not so clever

The strike on Boxing Day was extremely well supported at Arnos Grove, with only a handful of drivers turning up for work. As usual in these circumstances, management ran a shuttle service between Arnos Grove and Cockfosters. Sadly, and as often happens on such days, safety took a back seat. **Drivers are reminded that, as there are no tripcock testers between Arnos and Cockfosters, there should be a second person in the cab on the off chance that the tripcock arm is missing or defective.** If management decline to provide you with a second person, you should decline to drive the train.

If you have questions about anything in the above article, please speak to a rep.

X-ray specs, anyone?



Take a look at this notice case at Seven Sisters depot. If you look closely, you will see a notice which has been posted in the middle so that most of it is obscured by the door frames and cannot be read! It's amazing to think that this notice was put up by the same management team who jump on drivers for the smallest 'staff error'.

Hardship fund – what's it about?

For those less fortunate than ourselves, a hardship fund can be the last resort to ensuring that bills are paid and food is on the table, when pay is lost during strike action. Often, strike action is taken to improve the members' pay and working conditions. The hardship fund allows members to make a donation to the branch and, presently, branch official Paul Bell is responsible for the day to day running and managing of the fund.

The allocation of funds is decided by the branch, within a democratic decision making process, and this ensures that funds are used for the neediest. Throughout the year, Finsbury Park branch will organise social events which will help contribute towards this fund. The hardship fund is audited with an end of year report recorded, as part of the Annual General Meeting document.



Seven Sisters Safety rep, Derek Bishop (left), hands over his donation of £500 to hardship fund organizer, Paul Bell

If you wish to make a donation, please attend the Finsbury Park branch meetings on the first and second Thursday of every month at 4pm, at The 12 Pins Public House (nearest tube

station – Finsbury Park, Piccadilly and Victoria lines). Otherwise, ring Paul Bell on 07904 951 834.

Stitched up after helping out

Next time a manager asks you to do them a favour, think again. Back in November, one of our driver members at Seven Sisters agreed to help out a duty manager who had no spares to relieve him after he had done almost 4 hours on the front of a train. The driver agreed to run the train to Walthamstow and back to prevent a shutdown, even though he knew this was likely to take him over his maximum driving parameter. However, on arrival at Walthamstow, he was told that there was no relief at Seven Sisters and he should stable the train in the sidings. It was here he made an operational mistake of not following the correct procedure for exiting the sidings. In mitigation, he was tired, hungry and needed to go to the toilet and the procedure was relatively new with training amounting to a hand-out.

He did take steps to ensure his safety and he made no attempt to cover up what had happened when later questioned by a DRM.

After an interview with this DRM his honesty was accepted and it was agreed

that he needed some retraining in this procedure and this was what he was expecting when he next booked on for duty.

However it was later discovered that a TOSM gave an instruction to all her colleagues that it was OK for him to pick up his duty. Quite reasonably, our member questioned this instruction when he next booked on for duty as he did not want to compromise safety or his position in any way. Instead of the corrective action plan being devised he was then made to sit around the depot for 4 days without any information or idea what was going on and kept right up to his booking off time. He was then suspended and told that a full investigation was going to take place which had already taken place following another interview about the same incident by another duty manager.

It later came to light that while on suspension his case was being openly discussed and quoted by a TOSM in another disciplinary held at the other end of the line for a similar incident, saying he was going to CDI about 10 days before he was told

himself! This is a breach of confidentiality and totally unprofessional. Instead of a corrective action plan management threw the book at our member who faced a number of gross misconduct charges with a distinct possibility of him being sacked. Ludicrously, he was sent to CDI by the same manager who said it was OK for him to pick up a train!

The CDI panel must have had serious misgivings about his treatment as he was given a final caution instead of the sack. This is still harsh considering his honesty and willingness to help out on the day.

In a further ironic twist he was instructed to report back to the same TOSM for a corrective action plan who had sent him to CDI and said it was OK for him to pick up!

It is an all too common tale of our members being harshly treated for any errors whilst managers are allowed to break every rule in the book with impunity. One thing is for sure: his membership of the RMT substantially improved his chances of not paying the ultimate price and is a reminder why it is important to be in our union.

Victoria line drivers' survey

Seven Sisters Safety Rep, Derek Bishop, is carrying out a survey to establish if there is a link between the train cab environment and the many musculoskeletal disorders suffered by drivers. If you haven't yet received the questionnaire, please see one of your local reps.

Next Branch Meetings

Twelve Pins Public House

(near Finsbury Park Stn)

Thursdays 14th February

7th, 14th and 21st March (all at 1600hrs)