

# RMT up front



**The newsletter for London Underground drivers**

**Issue 5, June 2010**

## FIT OR NOT FIT THAT IS THE QUESTION!!

Fitness for work does not seem to bother London Underground these days. Whether you are fit doesn't matter, management are now medically terminating you at a case conference there and then even if you are at work doing your job. In one case that happened only a few weeks ago, the driver came to work and booked on ready to do her duty, then went in for a normal case conference and within an hour and half of that case conference she had been medically terminated there and then.

This was not backed up by any Occupational Health medical advice saying that this driver could no longer carry out her substantive role as a train driver. On the contrary, the last medical report which they had (which was a year out of date) said that she was medically fit to carry out her job; from then to the time she was immorally and disgracefully terminate NO other medical advice was sought or given.

Yes you have read that last part correctly: they had no medical reports at all saying that this driver was unfit to carry out her driving job and yet they still sacked her.

The argument that they used was that over the last nine years of her employment she did not meet a magical 96% attendance figure. Now, trying to find this 96% attendance figure in any of London Underground's documents is one of the most impossible things to do. You have more chance of finding Gerry Duffy checking tickets on a gate line then finding this figure in any of London Underground's policies, procedures, standards or even guidelines.

So what management now seem to be doing is working to a figure that does not exist in a policy, standard or agreement that does not exist. Maybe

this 96% rule exists in some magical policy that can only be seen in the dead of night tucked away in a cupboard high up on the magical blood stained floors of 55 Broadway, because it is not in ANY London Underground policy or agreement or Standard that the unions have agreed to; and when you ask management to show you this magical figure written down they cannot.



There was another driver only a few days ago, who was in redeployment awaiting the outcome of an LUOH decision. You can imagine his joy when he attended his case conference with his rep to be told by his TOM that LUOH had declared him medically FIT to return to his driving duties. But his joy was short lived when his TOM told him he was going to medically terminate him anyway. And do you know what? HE DID... there and then!

This now is an attack on all members of staff and a change to our term and conditions. We cannot allow them to get away with this nonsense. 96% works out as 9 days off in 12 months, and it does not matter even if it is an item that would never be used under the Attendance at work procedure. Management are now saying that you

were not at work and that is what matters - not whether it would be used as an item or not. One of the above drivers asked in the case conference, "if I was to walk out of this TOM's office and slip on a wet floor in front of you and break my leg, would that still be used against me even though it was an accident at work", and the TOM's reply was, "YES, it wont count as an item, but will count against your 96% because you were not at work."

This is now the mad bad world of London Underground that we have to work in and we believe that this is the straw that broke the camel's back. We have even heard that drivers are being asked to sign letters and agreements in P&D sessions saying that they will maintain a 96% attendance level. NO NO NO... if you wish to be medically terminated like the drivers we have mentioned in this article, then by all means sign your job away by agreeing to these mad proposals,

but we must advise you in the strongest terms: DO NOT SIGN UP TO ANY AGREEMENT OR PLEDGE TO MAINTAIN ARTIFICIAL ATTENDANCE LEVELS. If you are in any doubt seek advice from your rep. Otherwise what you should probably be doing is writing on the memo "PLEASE FEEL FREE TO MEDICALLY TERMINATE ME AT YOUR CONVENIENCE."

The time has come to make a stand. We can only hope that you now do understand what LUL, this so-called accredited "investors in people" company, really thinks of you, and hope that you will take what steps are needed to stop this unfair treatment. We need to get back to being treated like human beings again, and shown some respect and common decency by our employer.

**One union for drivers - All grades united**

# LU's attack on driver's role gathers pace

The attacks on the drivers role, the de-skilling of our grade and the compromises to safety, more commonly known as LU's Operational Effectiveness Programme (OEP), is gathering pace. More meetings between LU and your trade unions have taken place recently.

Your safety reps have been asked to comment on 5 more proposed changes to our rules and procedures by the 4th of June. The latest crop of Laurel and Hardy proposals include, reversing blind without changing ends after an overrun, despatching blind from category 'A' platforms with defective OPO equipment and carrying passengers over shunt signals.

Let's take each of these individually. Reversing blind back into a platform after an overrun without changing ends is an obvious watering down of the procedure that we currently use. With what we currently use the risk to staff and passengers is deemed, to use LU's terminology, ALARP, as low as reasonably possible. So to offer us an alternative that carries more risk is a blatant 'service recovery before safety' policy. Let's face it, how long does it actually take for the driver to change ends? What's wrong with going on to the next station? Why are we compromising safety for the sake of a few minutes gained in service recovery time?

Despatching blind from Category 'A' platforms with defective OPO equipment, again, is not safer than the rule that we

currently use. The problem is, the rule we currently use requires station staff and LU's plan for the future appears to be a railway more akin to the bad old days of British Rail stations with no staff available, a run down environment and hooligan's utopia. This proposal would see the driver, on arrival at a category 'A' platform with defective OPO equipment, open the doors, fully shut down the train, run back down the platform to a place where you can get a full view of the full PTI, run back to the driver's cab, fully recharge the train, close the doors, fully shut down again, run back down the platform again, check there are no children caught in the doors or that no unlucky person has fallen down between the train and platform during the considerable length of time that the driver was unable to see the full view of the PTI, run back to the driver's cab again, fully recharge the train again, re-set your connect radio (although this is not mentioned in the new proposal we assume they want us to do this!), check the signal is clear, depart, cross your fingers and hope for the best. Phew! I am exhausted just writing it. Hope LU can dare to add this to a group of proposals aimed at 'service recovery' is beyond us; this will take an eternity to do and the bottom line is, it is still not safe!

Carrying passengers over shunt signals is a more complicated proposal, we kid you not. There are many arms to this

new proposal but we believe this will create a danger to passengers and staff alike: passengers unwittingly carried over shunt signals into sidings will face the same risk that killed a passenger at Liverpool Street a few years back when he was crushed to death going through the communicating doors as the train was snaking into the siding; LU's control measure of driving at 5 mph would not have helped that passenger and would not be safe for anyone caught in a similar circumstance. This would also place our drivers at greater risk of assault from drunken or aggressive passengers who we would find ourselves trapped in the sidings with.

All of these proposals represent an unacceptable compromise to the safety of passengers and drivers for very little benefit. What do you think?

This massive change to our Rule Book comes not long after we have just received a new Rule Book with many more changes. Many drivers are still not clear about some of the changes that took place to procedures last time round; add more changes and very little retraining and this all adds up to an accident waiting to happen. You would think that all these proposed changes would encourage LU to give us more training, but no: LU plan to reduce what was the 5 day block, now 4, down to 3 days of annual training, but that concern will be raised in a separate article.

## Olympic Doping Scandal

As a document outlining LU's initial plans for the Olympics in London in 2012 was made available to the Train's Health and Safety Council (THSC) last week, one thing became apparent, the only dopes are going to be us, the staff.

It was a surprise to the THSC that such a document had already been produced by LU let alone to find out that there was a working party set up to look in to such matters so soon. Needless to say we have not been consulted.

As if it wasn't enough that us in London weren't footing the bill, last estimate £9 billion, and rising, it turns out it's us that will be doing all the work; don't expect to see Boris Johnson doing a days work

anytime soon.

The document did tell us that LU expect drivers to be running trains until 2.30am. By the time you book off and get home there will be no time for you to enjoy the athletics spectacular that you have footed to bill to organise. Surprise surprise there was no mention of remuneration for us drivers to work round the clock.

It was also noted in the document that there will be a need for extra drivers over this period; makes you wonder why LU seem hell bent on sacking so many of them for this slightest thing! Apparently the shortfall of drivers will be made up by CSAs who will be trained up as drivers

but only seconded into the position of driver for the duration of the games. No mention of future use for strikes in the document.

All these station staff driving trains will no doubt leave a hole in the required numbers for the safe running of the stations: apparently this will be sorted by creating a new grade, Olympic CSA. These will be LU office staff drafted in to cover stations during the games. Good to know that we will have well trained, well motivated, professional staff in place in case the terrorists decide the Olympics will be a good target. But look on the bright side, the Olympic legacy will leave us a velodrome in Barking!

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### Join RMT

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**Regional Council website:  
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