

AARC Professional Services 'exceeds expectations' with delivery of health and safety guide for Network Rail System Operator

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Rail consultancy [AARC Professional Services \(AARCPS\)](#) has supported [Network Rail's](#) System Operator (SO) function with the production of a new health and safety guide.

The SO is responsible for ensuring the network operates as 'one seamless and high performing organisation.' Its role involves strategic planning for the future, provision of high-quality analysis and advice, production of the timetable, and managing industry wide relationships, including freight.

To help highlight its continuing commitment to health, safety and wellbeing, the SO set out to produce a dedicated guide, aligned to Network Rail's lifesaving rules. This guide would cover all business activities potentially affecting the health and safety of its workforce, suppliers, passengers, the public and freight customers.

It appointed AARCPS, a specialist consultancy run by railway people for railway people, to support the

production of this document, with Transport Systems and HSQE Specialist Liz Parkes and Change Consultant Emma Somers taking the lead. In 2023, Liz had also helped Network Rail to remodel its overarching health and safety management systems into an accessible tool for continuous improvement in risk management.

Liz explained: “For this latest assignment, the key objectives were to successfully communicate the health and safety processes, standards and interfaces, as well as ‘the what to dos’, ‘how-to dos’ and systems for continuous improvement. The guide also had to support Network Rail’s broader health and safety management system, as well as meeting the System Operator’s strategic business objectives and safety strategy.”

To produce the guide, Liz and Emma liaised with over 25 members of the SO team, including individual interviews, working groups and consultations. The document is set to be reviewed annually and developed into an action plan. The guide itself features:

- ‘One-stop-shop’ for readily accessible information.
- Practical tips and resources based around those activities that carry a health and safety risk, including working from home, display screen equipment, site visits, travelling alone and driving.
- Organisation based information including strategic and system level health and safety arrangements at Network Rail, plus details of how the different teams within the System Operator impact on the railway, workforce and customer safety.
- Examples and reflections using real life scenarios, intended to challenge people’s knowledge and behaviours, encouraging discussion and action.

Liz added: “The guide has actually been written to highlight the relationship between the System Operator function and health, safety and wellbeing and, in particular, how, from an individual and activity perspective, everyone works together to manage the issues, prevent accidents and improve the collective safety and wellbeing of the organisation.”

The guide has been welcomed by project sponsor Richard Weatherstone, Operations Safety Manager for the System Operator. He explained: “From the outset, AARCPS has been extremely professional, giving advice throughout, whilst playing an integral part in managing and developing what has been a challenging project through to its conclusion.”