

Network Rail launches pilot programme to keep passengers moving in bad weather

November 25, 2022



Network Rail has teamed up with Newcastle University, Met Office and MetDesk to run a Weather Academy pilot programme, designed to keep everyone moving when the worst weather hits.

Bringing together rail operations staff, asset engineers and meteorology experts, the programme hopes to identify ways of delivering a safer, more reliable service for passengers during adverse and extreme weather.

Following the recommendations of world-renowned meteorology expert Dame Julia Slingo, Professor Paul Davies (Met Office) and Professor Hayley Fowler (Newcastle University) on how the railway could better manage weather and climate risk, Network Rail is working closely with industry experts to empower railway workers with the right knowledge to improve mitigation against the impacts of adverse weather conditions so passengers and freight can continue to move safely and reliably.

Dame Julia Slingo, lead author of the Weather Advisory Task Force report, said: "This is a landmark event. This is the first time, in the transport sector at least, that we got people together to think about how you manage the considerable risks to operations that you face from adverse weather and related hazards."

Network Rail staff worked through practical case studies, interactive tuition and scenario-based exercises to improve the management of weather risks, arming them with the knowledge and skills required to improve how these risks are managed and mitigated. Further workshops are being planned to take place next year.

Matthew Shelton, Network Rail asset engineer said: "I found the workshop illuminating, fascinating and extremely useful. The level of information provided enhanced my knowledge and broadened my understanding of several critical areas of the business. I will be a more effective, more aware and more empathic risk manager as a result."

Network Rail has committed to running a safe, affordable and more reliable service for passengers during adverse and extreme weather as a key pillar of its' wide-reaching Environmental Sustainability strategy.

More frequent and more extreme weather conditions caused by climate change are increasingly impacting the ability to run the railway safely and on time. As well as improving workers' knowledge on how to counteract these risks, embedding resilience into the way that railway assets are designed, built, operated and maintained will play a key role in keeping the railway running in adverse conditions.

Network Rail also announced in July that an extreme weather taskforce was being launched following the unprecedented weather conditions this summer.

The taskforce will consider four key areas, each led by an independent expert in their field. Three of these areas will be focused on gathering insights from other countries and making comparisons with international rail networks that are more used to dealing with extreme heat and fluctuations in temperature.