Nutshell Apps launches rail safety reporting toolkit as part of Rail Safety Week

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The free toolkit from rail technology specialist Nutshell Apps includes all essential daily safety reports and briefings, designed with Network Rail-standard forms and sheets in mind.

Rail Safety Week is one of the top events within the rail industry calendar. In light of the tragic accidents that have happened in recent years, including the fatalities at Margam in 2019, continuous assessment and improvements to rail safety continues to be top of the industry agenda.

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) has reported that, despite measures taken by the industry to ensure the health and safety of operatives, there are still significant gaps in rail safety management. The individual workers are the most important factor for rail businesses to consider, as they are at the core of the sector. If they don't feel confident of their safety when stepping out onto a site, this causes major issues in terms of mental health and productivity.

There was a plethora of presentations, discussions, and news sharing sessions incorporated into Rail Safety Week, delivered by rail sector experts last week. Speakers included Managing Director of Scotland's Railway Alex Hynes, Chairman of Network Rail Sir Peter Hendy CBE, and HM Chief Inspector of Railways at

ORR Ian Prosser. They were joined by numerous other industry thought leaders to cover all aspects of rail safety, including workforce mental health, passenger safety, and workforce safety onsite.

Inefficient safety reporting

One key area that's clearly still lacking across rail businesses is safety-critical reporting. The rail industry is notoriously embedded in outdated paper-and-pen processes that bring a whole host of issues to the modern rail workplace. Safety reporting completed on paper is no longer fit-for-purpose when considering the working environment and volume of forms specific to each report. All too often the forms are completed simply to fulfil protocol, then left to gather dust rather than analysed, so areas of risk are left unaddressed.

Time and time again we've seen preventable accidents and fatalities occur on track, down to poor communication and project management. The experts agree one of the key ways to alleviate this risk is through taking advantage of the emerging technology and innovation on offer to us and incorporating this into everyday rail work and planning.

One business that's supporting efforts toward creating a safer rail industry is Nutshell Apps. The app-building and digital transformation firm has just released a rail safety reporting toolkit in conjunction with Rail Safety Week, complete with six apps built using industry-standard forms and processes.

The kit includes safety-critical apps ranging from Network Rail-standard Close Call and Near Miss reporting, to a Site Briefing app that can be updated in light of daily safety reports — covering all bases in the planning and delivery of safe work.

"This is a time when all rail suppliers are being encouraged to rethink their manual or spreadsheet safety processes," commented Alex Nichol, Product Director at Nutshell Apps. "Coming from the top down, the rail industry is taking a zero-tolerance approach with safety, and that starts with inefficient safety reporting processes."

"We're aiming to present an affordable and easily implemented mobile solution to the rail supply chain, and that starts with our suite of safety reporting apps, which we've made completely free with a basic Nutshell subscription."

The introduction of mobile devices onto the rail site is still a relatively recent development, but it's already paying dividends to rail workforces across the country. Rail professionals are finding having these handy apps on their phones makes the process of safety reporting quicker and easier than ever.

It's more likely for a worker out on site to stay compliant with health and safety regulations if they can access briefs and reports on mobile, as it requires such little effort, leaving them more time to focus on the job at hand rather than admin-heavy pencil-pushing.

Nutshell was recently named a tech industry leader for improving rail safety and planning with its library of rail apps, and has now offered this toolkit to subscribers for free as a way to encourage safer behaviour on the rail frontline.

It's clear that as an industry we still have a way to go in making the rail working environment as safe as possible, and it's events such as Rail Safety Week that bring to light just how many factors we need to take into consideration to improve the sector for future generations.

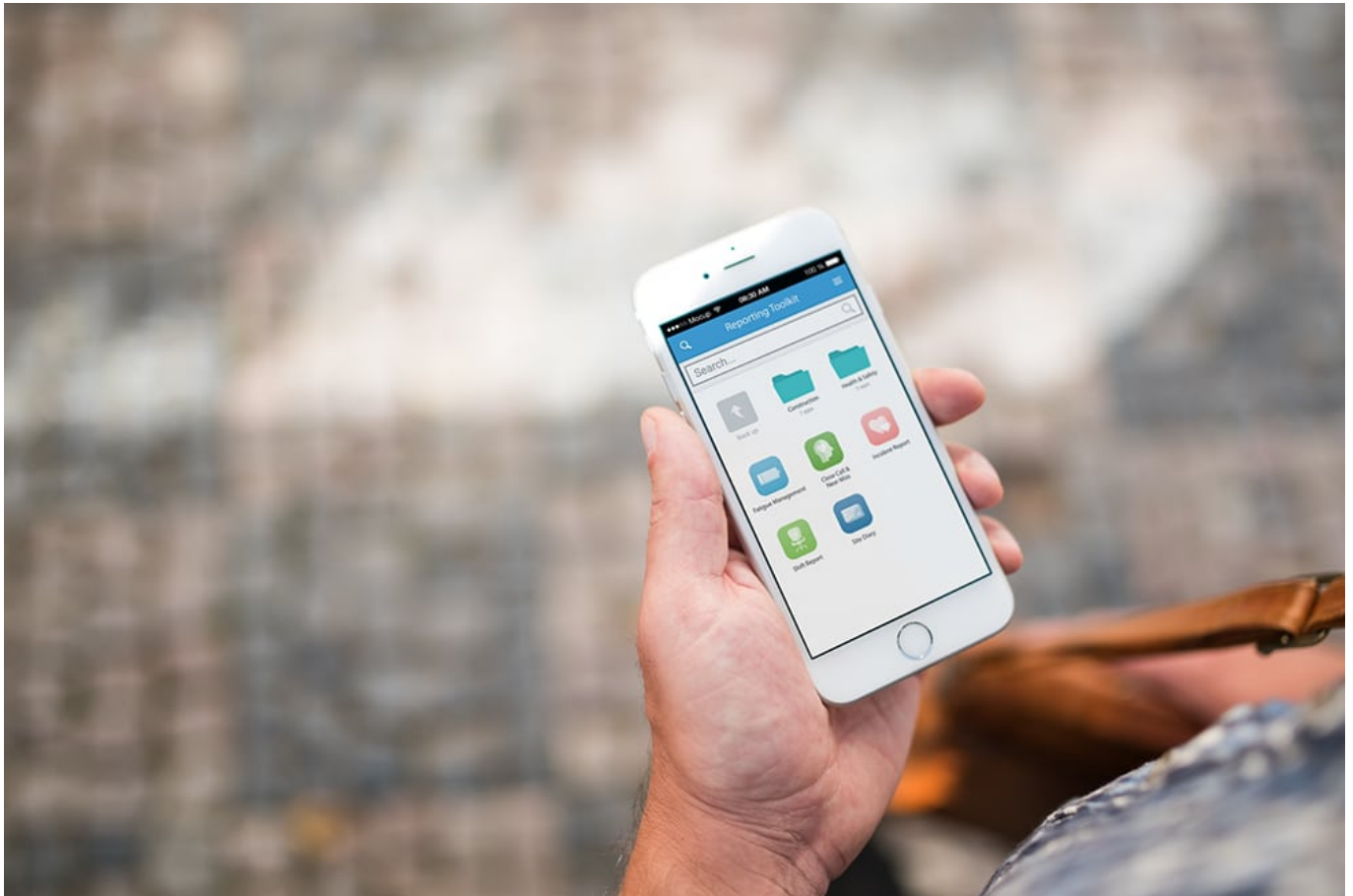If you'd like to watch the presentations from Rail Safety week you can visit the event website: https://www.railsafetyweek.org/rsw-2021

Photo credit: Nutshell Apps