

Peddalling to disaster – Network Rail issues a safety warning to cyclists after near misses at level crossings

March 26, 2021



Network Rail is warning people enjoying the warmer weather, especially cyclists, to respect the red lights at level crossings.

It comes after a [shocking video](#) shows four adult male cyclists completely ignoring a red warning light to cross the railway line, causing a train to brake to a stop. The last cyclist makes it across the railway with just three seconds to spare and if the driver of the approaching train had not applied his emergency brake in time, he could well have lost his life.

In another similar incident, a lone cyclist can be seen trying to cross, without dismounting his bicycle, just before an approaching train. Had his chain slipped or malfunctioned, he would have been stranded in front of the oncoming train. Again, the driver had to make an emergency stop.

This year there have been 28 reported cases of level crossing misuse involving cyclists across the rail network and a quarter of this total were near misses.¹ This comes the week after [new figures revealed a](#)

40% increase in youth trespass incidents in Britain following the first national lockdown in July 2020², and there are now concerns about the behaviour of adults around the railway.

Network Rail's chief health and safety officer, Rupert Lown, said: "The attitude of these adult cyclists in both incidents is deeply concerning. Every time someone strays onto the railway they are not only putting themselves at risk of serious, life-threatening injury, but they are presenting a danger to the driver and passengers of the approaching train as well. Trains can take a long time to stop, from full speed it can even be a full kilometre, and this highly stressful scenario can have a profound impact on the driver's mental health.

"These two recent cases could have had fatal consequences. Red lights at level crossings are there for a reason. The instructions are clear, so please don't ignore them."

Inspector Jon Pine, British Transport Police, said: "In nearly twenty years of policing I have seen few examples of such senselessly idiotic behaviour on a level crossing. These cyclists clearly had absolutely no regard for their own safety or that of others – and I speak from experience when I say we could have easily been dealing with the catastrophic consequences. Trespass is of course a criminal offence and we'd be more than happy to educate these cyclists on the very real dangers of the railway."

Both videos are currently being investigated and anyone with information on either incident should text the British Transport Police on 61016.

1. Stats (January 1 – March 24 2021) provided by Network Rail's National Safety Analysis and Reporting team
2. Stats provided by British Transport Police's National Disruption Fusion Unit
 - Footage of single cyclist captured 8 March 2021, level crossing at Ripple near Deal in Kent
 - Footage of group of four cyclists captured 21 March 2021, level crossing at Pebble Lane – on the main line between Rochester and Sole Street in Kent

Photo credit: Network Rail