

Rail launches new Health and Wellbeing Index

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Health economists at RSSB have developed a new Health and Wellbeing Index (HWI), specifically for the rail sector.

The index allows organisations to calculate the impact of health and wellbeing risks to employees, and compare health-based investment choices and decisions.

Rail companies will get an objective assessment of the options and see more clearly how health compares to other safety considerations and competing calls on budget.

The tool can aid legal compliance by providing better evidence. Organisations can assess whether strategies are working as far as is reasonably practicable and improve quality of life at work.

The HWI works in a similar way to the better-known FWI (Fatalities and Weighted Injuries) measure used in safety analysis and decision making.

Health and wellbeing risks to employees can include fatigue, stress, mental health, musculoskeletal disorders, hand arm vibration syndrome, respiratory conditions, and hearing loss. All of these put pressure on both the employees' own wellbeing as well the organisation's ability to operate. The railway has been working collaboratively to address the challenges through its strategy, Leading Health and Safety on

Britain's Railways, and the introduction of the HWI is one of the latest outputs.

RSSB's Director of System Safety and Health, Ali Chegini said: "This is a first. With the HWI, the rail industry is leading the way with this kind of approach. There has been no other known successful attempt to build a composite metric to measure health and wellbeing, least of all one that has the potential be used to directly compare health and safety. I commend it to our members, it could offer a double win of improved quality of life, a healthier and happier workforce, and all while reducing unnecessary costs."

Martin Frobisher, Group Director Safety, Technical and Engineering, Network Rail, and RSSB Board Member said: "Network Rail is delighted with the Health and Wellbeing Index initiative. It is an excellent piece of work and has really helped us to understand and prioritise health and wellbeing issues. We are now routinely using the index for our executive safety reviews, and it is helping us prioritise improvements in a more effective and targeted way. I would thoroughly recommend that other businesses adopt this measure."

Stuart Webster-Spriggs, HSQES Director, VolkerRail Group said: "This is a ground-breaking piece of work which will really tackle the issues of reporting, measuring and benchmarking health and wellbeing metrics and determine 'what good looks like' in the rail sector."

The pilot version of the tool is now available for RSSB members to use.

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