

COMPETENCY ON HERITAGE RAILWAYS

Who is required to be competent?

- Persons engaged in safety critical roles on heritage railways are required to be able to demonstrate competency in any role which they undertake.
- Safety critical roles would typically include footplate and train staff, signallers, permanent way workers and those engaged in maintenance of rolling stock, infrastructure and signalling.

What is competence?

- Persons who are deemed competent should be able to demonstrate reasonable knowledge of the tasks which they undertake.
- There should be a syllabus of what they need to know for each discipline (for example the learning goals to reach the grade of fireman/secondman should be clearly set out and tested).
- A record should be kept of periodic examinations in that person's file.

How may competence be achieved?

- **A person may be externally qualified** – for instance someone who has undertaken a mechanical apprenticeship at a main line depot could be judged competent when carrying out repairs on a heritage railway. It is important to check that the qualification exists and is current and that the person concerned has experience of the area in which he/she will be working (for instance a main line EMU driver may never have driven a diesel loco or a main line fitter may never have worked on vacuum brake equipment).
- **A person may be internally qualified** – this can be achieved by formal or informal training leading to a set examination and the awarding of a qualification. In such cases it is advisable that more than one person is involved in the examination, or “passing out” process. An example of this would be the training course and subsequent examinations taken by a signaller before he is allowed to take control of a particular signal box.
- **A person may be qualified by virtue of experience** – there are many people working in the heritage railway sector with a wealth of experience but no formal qualification. These people would be judged competent if it can be proven that they have undertaken a specific task over a number of years to a satisfactory standard. For instance someone who has undertaken maintenance tasks could be judged as competent. In such cases there should be some evidence that this is so, an example of this would be maintenance records over a period of years showing the participation of the individual. In such cases the Head of Department would have to satisfy themselves that the experience offered was adequate.
- **A person may be externally assessed** – for instance a Driver Standards Manager from a large railway could be brought into a smaller railway to assess persons from that railway. Adequate training would still be required, and would need to be documented. Another example might be where one person on a railway is in sole charge of maintenance and where there is no one else on site qualified to assess them.

Remember

- No main line standards apply to heritage railways. It is up to management to set out clearly what is expected as a qualification in each discipline. This will be incorporated in the railway's Safety Management System.
- The railway should have clear documentary evidence as to who is qualified at each grade.
- The railway must be able to demonstrate adequate training for each job. For instance in the case of a driver there should be evidence of a progression through the grades over a period of time – together with evidence of examinations as grades are achieved.
- Short cuts are not acceptable.

How competency affects the investigation process

Should your railway be unfortunate enough to have an incident then the investigation would take the following form – how would your railway fare?

- VEHICLE RECORDS – The maintenance records of the train would be examined, were they up to date, when was it last inspected and to what standard?
- MAINTENANCE STAFF – Who inspected the train, were they competent and were their names recorded in a competence register?
- ON TRAIN STAFF – Were the driver, assistant, guard and other staff currently qualified? What form did their training take, was it documented?
- INFRASTRUCTURE – When was the track on which the train was travelling last inspected, and by whom. The maintenance records would be examined to see if there were any historical problems. Were structures such as gates and fences in good order and their periodic examinations up to date?
- SIGNALLING – Maintenance records would be checked to make sure that the signalling had been signed off for use recently. The qualifications of the signaller would be checked, were they currently qualified?

To sum up

- Persons should be properly trained and be able to demonstrate adequate knowledge for any task which they undertake.
- Competencies and training should be documented.
- Competencies should be verified by the railway concerned to check that they are both relevant and current.
- Competencies should be revalidated at periodic intervals.

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