

Seasons Greetings

After another challenging year for all of us with further complications arising due to the Pandemic we would like to thank you for all your hard work in continuing to provide a safe service to the industry.

Providers should ensure that the Skills Backbone events calendars are updated to communicate any closures that may arise by adding 'unavailable' dates and confirming as a priority when the business is open again.

The NSAR Annual Report has been included with this briefing note for you to read.

Please make sure all invoices and signed 2022 contracts are returned to accreditationadmin@nsar.co.uk before 31st December 2021. And don't forget to get your Annual Review completed and Submitted by Monday 31st January 2022.

One final reminder, with Christmas being a busy period for the railway please do not to delay training and assessment notifications which may impact on Christmas planned work.



Events Calendar

Please remember that if you are conducting training or assessments for Network Rail you still must put the events on the events calendar. Although these results do not get notified on Sentinel NSAR still need to be made aware that they are taking place as all Network Rail training falls under the RTAS rules.

Standalone courses of COSS & IWA

Please remember that COSS and IWA are now separate events. Please be extra vigilant when you upload the results of a COSS Initial as it will only upload the COSS competence. IWA is no longer auto-awarded.

Please make sure that all members of staff who complete notifications on Sentinel have been briefed on this change. Data corrections are now being monitored so any persistent offenders will be identified.

Delivering PTS in Prisons

NSAR has noted that there are Assured Providers registered as approved to use sites which are a variety of Closed or Open categories of HMP's. Some of these Providers do not currently have a dispensation against RTAS and PTS lesson plan requirements from Network Rail or dispensation that has been awarded in the past is more than 12 months old.

All Assured Providers should check that they are able to deliver the current version of the lesson plan within the HMP setting. If the Assured Provider is unable to deliver the current version of the lesson plan including the eLearning and track visit requirements, contact with NSAR must be made as a matter of urgency so that we may discuss whether a dispensation can be given. When contacting us please advise of the answers to the below questions which will aid our support to Network Rail.

- Will the delegates be more than 6 months away from release when trained?
- What version of the PTS lesson plan will be used?
- Is the e-learning able to be completed within the prison?
- Will the Track walk take place on the live infrastructure at the time of the classroom training or more than 21 days after the classroom event?
- Will the Track walk be simulated away from the live infrastructure?
- Who will be the Sponsors of the delegates?

Dispensations from Network Rail are valid for 12 months only and must be renewed. If your dispensation is older than 12 months old, then please contact NSAR immediately so that we may support you in bringing it up to date.

Reminder for the PTS Track Walk

The Track Visit and Practical Assessment must be for a minimum of 90 minutes duration in total. (this does NOT include time spent travelling to or from the site).

- A minimum of 20 minutes of the track visit must take place 'on or near the line' (as defined in the Rule Book) and include the observation of live operational train movements. This does not include movements in a sidings or depot.
- All the required parts of the track visit must be covered allowing each delegate time to demonstrate them, be allowed time to ask questions and be

- The duration of the track visit shall start when then trainer and delegates access to the site of the track visit, complete all elements, then be in a safe place e.g., on the lineside.
- The duration does not include the SSOW Briefing.
- The track visit duration does not include the emergency call assessment.

A non-operational trainer has dispensation to act as a COSS for the group for the visit but any other staff used for Site Warden must be operational.

Personal Track Safety: Maximum Delegate Numbers

Network Rail have worked collaboratively with the industry, listened to feedback from Providers, Trainers & Network Rail colleagues to address concerns raised regarding the delegate numbers for PTS Initial training.

The PTS Initial courses are made up of both classroom learning and a practical track visit which introduces colleagues to a live environment. Reducing delegate numbers will allow additional time for Trainers to fully support new colleagues, reduce risk while waiting for all practical elements and 1:1's.

[illegible]

DC Lines initial & recertification events

It has come to our attention that some Providers are running combined DC Lines Initial and Recertification events. This is **NOT** allowed. These events must be run separately and follow the Pre-Requisites set out within the Training Material.

Online Exams

NSAR continue to see misunderstandings of the Online exam process.

Please make sure there is a clear process that Training managers, Trainers and Assessor are understanding of for RTAS compliance.

- Both non-operational and operation individuals are to complete their exams if holding COSS Competence in line with RTAS 4.3.8.1.
- Assured Trainers and Assessors must complete their On-Line Exams no less than 21 Days before expiry, to ensure that Competences are maintained as stated in RTAS 4.3.8.9.
- All Trainer and Assessors can only take additional On-Line Exams for the assured Capabilities that they deliver outlined in RTAS 4.3.8.2.
- Operational individuals must successfully complete the nine (9) to twelve (12) months interim assessment PRIOR to taking the On-Line Exams in line with RTAS 4.3.8.3.

Your Competence Management Systems must be view and reviewed throughout the year to ensure your delivery team maintain capability to deliver.

Authorised Person [AP] and Nominated Person [NP] - Online Exams

Network Rail are currently in the process of adding AP/NP Trainer & Assessor online exams to the question tools system. These will replace Non Operational AP/NP Trainer & Assessor Interim Work Place Assessment and Recertification Events.

These exams are not in place yet and we will communicate the live date when Network Rail have approved them.

Reminder of Live Exposed (RoLE)

The use of Reminder of Live Exposed (RoLE) equipment had a mandatory compliance date of 19th November 2021 under standard NR/L3/ELP/29987, 'Working on or about 25kV A.C. Electrified Lines.' following the recent safety alert (NRX21-09).

In preparation for this change a briefing has been produced for Nominated and Authorised Persons.

The briefing material will be provided to Network Rail and contractor organisations to brief and upskill staff in the safe use of Reminder of Live Exposed (RoLE) equipment, including:

- Where and how to install RoLE equipment
- How to select the correct piece of RoLE equipment based on the type of work being undertaken
- How to brief personnel on the presence of RoLE equipment and actions to be taken as a result of its use.

Any trainer and assessors who hold AP/NP will need this adding to their sentinel profile via a briefing. If you have not had this briefing we are planning to deliver some, to get an idea of numbers please contact accreditationadmin@nsar.co.uk and we will get some dates together.

Provider Capabilities on Skills Backbone

It's the providers responsibility to make sure that their Capabilities on Skills Backbone are correct and up to date.

Please can all providers review their capabilities list on Skills Backbone to make sure that they are correct and a true reflection of what your Trainers/Assessors can offer.

If capabilities need to be added or removed please use the Request Capabilities Change feature on your profile within Skills Backbone. A step by step guide on how to do this is within the User Guide that can be downloaded from your providers Skills Backbone account.

OTP upskilling via Pilot Process [CDG]

The pilot process was designed for the application of capability where there are increasing skill shortages due to reducing pools of trainers.

Since the launch of the pilot process the volume of OTP applications particularly has been overwhelming. Over time, applications have increasingly included the application for competence as well as capability and the amount of information provided to justify the use of the pilot process over standard upskilling processes has reduced.

An application for competence is accepted as reasonable where an item of plant is brand new to the framework or exceptionally rare and therefore volume of skills and trainer pools are particularly low. The pilot process should be only considered an opportunity to use when all other options have been exhausted. It should not be used as a substitute for attending training to obtain competence or to not try to secure mentoring.

As a result, NSAR is directed to make sure that applications detail why the standard process of obtaining competence through training attendance and then mentoring cannot be completed and what attempts have been made by Assured Providers and trainers prior to applying to the pilot process.

With immediate effect applications via the pilot process will be expected to detail and provide supporting evidence of the answers to the following questions. This is to make sure that applications to CDG are clear that the pilot process is being used as the last resort to prevent training shortages across the industry.

1. If the competence is not held, whether the competence has been previously held and if not, why.
2. The number of other trainers available within the industry with the competencies to train.
3. What specific efforts have been made by a provider to progress the upskill; and
4. What volume of demand is the provider experiencing to make sure that those with capability do not experience Skills Fade [as described in RTAS]

Due to the current COVID restrictions Premises Checks will either be completed as part of the Compliance Visit or the Unannounced Visit. The checks may also be completed remotely if appropriate.

Please remember to keep your Policies and Procedures on Skills Backbone up to date as per the RTAS Rules.

Before a visit your Quality Assurance Manager will check your documentation on Skills Backbone so by keeping these documents up to date it will help your visit run smoother. These are uploaded within Section 7 of the Annual Review.

A positive start can be seen by many individuals who have completed their Midterm reviews.

We hope the your finding the new guidance and Skills Backbone process beneficial to documenting your CPD activities.

Please remember to document your entries as you go and submit CPD before the 31st June 2022 to make sure any changes can be made in time.

Both the NSAR CPD leaflet and Guidance note can be found on our website:
<https://www.nsar.co.uk/qa-resources>

Data Corrections

NSAR and Network Rail have been working together this year to complete analysis on Data Corrections that have been submitted to the Sentinel Helpdesk. At first our focus has been on Data Corrections that have been submitted over 120 days after the course completion date. However the long term goal is for all Data Corrections that have been submitted over 21 days to be reviewed, as per RTAS Rules 5.15.7.

5.15.7. If the delay to the awarding of training and/or assessment events onto the Sentinel database is found to exceed twenty-one (21) Days, the circumstances shall be reviewed by Network Rail on a case by case basis, which may result in a Formal Review and sanctions being applied.

Please remember to double check the following before awarding the training or assessment event on the Sentinel Database:

- The correct Trainer/Assessor has been selected
- The event is being awarded on the correct date
- All competencies have been awarded
- All Candidates have had their results uploaded.

Thank you to all the providers who have cooperated so far when information has been requested, your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Provider Conduct during a visit

We have continued to experience examples of uncooperative or disrespectful behaviour towards Quality Assurance Managers attending centres and training offices. Whilst these have not been aggressive, they have still been uncomfortable experiences for Quality Assurance Managers and Assured Provider staff equally.

QA Visits are designed to spotlight and celebrate an Assured Providers good practice, provide independent support and give feedback for compliance to RTAS and the Quality Assurance Framework. We trust that Assured Providers will embrace all visits by NSAR and make sure that time on site positive, mutually respectful at all times.

Assurance Visit duration & frequency

The QA Team is aware that there has been an understanding in the RTAS community that Gold Assured Providers will receive a one-day visit only. During the 2020-21 programme there has been examples where this has been possible, however these have been limited particularly as Covid-19 restrictions meant that delivery of QA activities required varying the delivery methods.

Please be aware that all Compliance Assurance Visits will continue to be two-day visits regardless of Assurance Grading and may be completed by more than one QAM. Where required the visit may also be extended to additional day(s). The time elapsing between visits dependant on Assurance Grade will continue, however please be reminded of the regime changes detail which were communicated in April 2020 paying particular attention to the text in blue. This is clear that Delivery and Compliance visits by NSAR can take place at any time and on more than one occasion throughout the year. Delivery & Compliance Assurance Visits follow the same cycle.

Gold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visits will take place 15-18 months since the last visit • 1x Compliance visit including premises checks and verification • 1x Delivery visit including trainer observation • Unannounced Compliance Visit(s) • Unannounced trainer observation(s) <p>Additional satellite centre compliance and/or trainer observation visits [notified & unannounced]</p>
Silver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visits will take place within 12 months since the last visit • 1x Compliance visit including premises checks and verification • 1x Delivery visit including trainer observation • Unannounced Compliance Visit(s) • Unannounced trainer observation(s) • Additional satellite centre compliance and/or trainer observation visits [notified & unannounced] <p>Additional Unannounced visits as required</p>
Bronze	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit will take place within 9-12 months since the last visit • 1x Compliance visit including premises checks and verification • 1x Delivery visit including trainer observation • Increased Unannounced Compliance Visit(s) • Increased Unannounced trainer observation(s) • Additional satellite centre compliance and/or trainer observation visits [notified & unannounced] <p>Additional unannounced visits as required</p>

The QA team regularly review their own conflicts of interest register and assess their validity.

Conflicts of interest which are generated from personal relationships, including bloodline [family], legal [marriage], friendship and/or financial relationships shall remain an identified conflict of interest, reviewed annually and until ethical and operational risks are determined as having reduced to an insignificant level.

NSAR Provider Forum/ Webinar Workshops

Webinar workshops will continue remotely for the time being. For those that may have missed any workshops you can find these available on our social media platforms and on request via Freshdesk. In 2022, we plan to hold the following webinars:

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Communication & Getting in touch

Contact us by using Freshdesk, <https://nsar.freshdesk.com>. Freshdesk is a Helpdesk support tool and tickets raised have an SLA of 5 days, however, if your request is urgent, you can set its priority as urgent. Please make sure that your communication is always kept to a professional standard and your enquiry is best suited to NSAR and not another channel.

If you need to contact NSAR through Freshdesk please make sure you select **Quality Assurance** as the Department & Group. By not selecting the correct Department it will cause a delay in response to your query.

If you wish to contact another section of NSAR but are unsure which please still use Quality Assurance even if it is another department that needs to respond as the QA team monitor Freshdesk regularly and we can reassign it.

Please see below some simple Freshdesk housekeeping which will assist with keeping the system running efficiently.

- Never close your Freshdesk ticket, this is to be done by NSAR, by closing your ticket elements of your query may be missed.
- Do not respond to a closed ticket, if your query has been closed but you still have questions regarding it please raise a new ticket and reference the previous ticket number.
- Do not raise duplicate tickets, this is either from the same account or multiple people from within the same provider.

Merry Christmas & Safe 2022,

NSAR QA Team

