

Accident investigation: developments and roles

Independent accident investigation bodies (AIBs) have an increasingly important role following railway accidents and incidents. Ensuring effective liaison between AIBs and national safety authorities (NSAs) is key to ensuring that the lessons identified during investigations are acted upon, by duty holders and others, and safety improvements are made.

AIBs are responsible for investigating accidents and incidents without apportioning blame or liability. They analyse lessons learnt to decide whether to make recommendations to help improve safety. The role of NSAs is a much wider one of monitoring, promoting and enforcing safety and developing the safety regulatory framework. When safety recommendations are issued by an AIB, the NSA usually considers them and, where appropriate, acts on them or ensures that duty holders act on them.

The paper and presentation will consider:

- How to set up liaison arrangements – between all parties involved - that work after an accident;
- Effective consultation between AIBs and NSAs before recommendations are finalised and reports prepared;
- Handling of recommendations addressed to NSAs;
- Passing on recommendations to duty holders and monitoring and assessing responses;
- NSA validation of duty holder actions;
- Reviewing closure of recommendations; and
- Reporting back by NSAs to AIBs.