

Legislative Council Panel on Transport
Subcommittee on matters relating to Railways

Non-stopping of an East Rail train

Purpose

This paper reports to Members the results of the investigation and follow up actions related to the incident of an East Rail train that failed to stop at Tai Wo Station on 28 April 2005.

The incident

2. At 7:18 am on 28 April 2005, a Lo-Wu bound East Rail train departed East Tsim Sha Tsui Station and stopped at stations along the alignment to allow passengers to board and alight as scheduled. At 7:49 am, the train departed Tai Po Market Station but did not stop at Tai Wo Station as scheduled for boarding and alighting.

3. After the train had passed through Tai Wo Station, the driver immediately made announcements on board to inform passengers who intended to alight at Tai Wo Station to get off at Fanling Station and then take a southbound train to return to Tai Wo Station. The East Rail Control Centre immediately arranged for a qualified member of staff to board the driving cab of the train at Fanling Station to supervise the driver. When the train arrived at the Lo Wu terminus, the driver was suspended from driving duties to assist in the investigation of the incident.

Safety monitoring of trains

4. In 1998, KCRC introduced the Automatic Train Protection (ATP) system to control and monitor the safe operation of East Rail trains. The system ensures that there is a safe distance between trains and that a train can proceed only if it is safe to do so.

5. In 2002, KCRC introduced the Automatic Train Operation (ATO) system on top of the ATP. The safety of train operation is still controlled and monitored by the ATP system. The ATO system replaces the driver for controlling the train speed and ensures that trains will stop when approaching the platforms and operate under the designed speed control profile.

6. If the ATO system does not function properly, the driver will perform the driving duties, but the ATP system still governs railway safety, e.g. by controlling the train's maximum speed and giving the go-ahead for the train to proceed.

Investigation results

7. Investigation results showed that as a result of loosened contact of a switch on the train, the train's ATO system did not have power and therefore did not function on that day. However, the ATP system functioned normally and the train was therefore driven by the driver according to ATP signals. Due to carelessness of the driver, he did not stop the train at Tai Wo Station in order to allow passengers to alight and board.

8. At the time of the incident, there was no train in the section of the track directly to the north of Tai Wo Station and the ATP system therefore allowed the train to safely pass through Tai Wo Station. The driver however did not stop the train, which was contrary to the operating procedures. The train passed through the station at a speed of about 80 km/hr, which is within the safe speed limit for a train to enter that section. The incident did not compromise passenger or railway safety, but it caused inconvenience to those passengers who originally intended to embark or disembark at Tai Wo Station.

9. Before the train pulled into the platform, there were standard announcements on the platform reminding passengers not to stand beyond the yellow line. Platforms at East Rail stations are designed according to international standards. Whenever a train passes through or enters a station, if passengers waiting at the platform stand behind the

yellow line, they can maintain a safe distance from the train which will not pose any danger to them. The current distance between the yellow line at East Rail platforms and the platform edge is in line with international safety standard.

10. After the incident, an alcohol test and a drug test were arranged for the driver and the tests confirmed that he was not under the influence of alcohol or drugs. The driver had also had sufficient rest time before assuming duty on that day.

11. KCRC has already replaced the relevant parts of the switch on the train.

Driver training

12. Currently, East Rail has about 200 drivers. All drivers receive 17 weeks of training and must pass a series of examinations before they assume driving duties. The driver training programme includes nine weeks of classroom and cab simulator training. The topics include basic knowledge of trains and railway systems, safety rules and handling emergencies. After passing the examinations, the drivers then receive eight weeks of practical driving training, during which they are guided and examined by qualified instructors.

13. In addition, to ensure that drivers' driving skills remain at a high level, all drivers must attend a refresher course every year. During the yearly refresher course driving skills and safety rules are reviewed and experiences in handling emergencies are shared. Drivers are re-examined on all safety rules every year and must pass the examination in order to continue their driving duties.

14. KCRC also arranges for inspectors to travel on board trains on a regular basis to monitor the performance of drivers and ensure the latter carry out their duties competently.

15. KCRC considers that the existing training and refresher courses for drivers train and equip them well for driving duties and handling emergencies.

Follow-up actions

16. KCRC is very concerned about the incident and has undertaken the following measures:

- (a) enhance the signalling system so as to supervise the station stopping of trains operating in manual modes (non-ATO). The enhancement works will be completed by the end of this year;
- (b) instructing all drivers that they must pay attention to the signals inside the driving cab that remind drivers to stop at stations. They include announcements of the next station, the audible reminding signals and the passenger train indicator; and
- (c) in the period before the signalling system modification works are completed, arranging to have a qualified member of staff accompany the driver to remind drivers to call at stations if a passenger train has to be driven by a driver under ATP control.

Conclusion

17. Although the incident did not affect passenger or train safety, and was unrelated to the operation of the railway systems or the train itself, KCRC is well aware that it has caused inconvenience to some passengers and that the public is concerned about the matter. Apart from undertaking the above measures, the Corporation will continue to closely monitor the performance of drivers and increase their vigilance to prevent such incidents.

Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation
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