



Release – 5th February 2003
From: The Paddington Survivors Group

RE: The Paddington Survivors Group response to the Department of Transport's news release - 'Government accepts HSC advice on rail safety'

The Paddington Survivors Group are bitterly disappointed with Alistair Darling's announcement regarding rail safety. We are also sceptical about the advice being given to the Secretary of State for Transport from the Health and Safety Commission SC, as this seems more geared towards governmental approval than what is best for the UK's travelling public.

We believe that action to implement a rail safety system that stops all trains at red lights should be done now. We have been campaigning for this ever since our train crash and yet, 3 years and 4 months on, prevarication and delay still continue.

Since the Clapham disaster in 1988 every Secretary of Transport has promised 'immediate and decisive action', 'money is no object' and 'full implementation of inquiry recommendations'. This latest statement follows the old story of going back on promises and finding excuses not to act immediately.

The simple facts are:

- High Speed Trains (HSTs) have no effective system to stop them crossing a red light.
- The BR ATP system is available to be fitted if there was the will.
- The better system, ERTMS Level 1 exists and could be fitted to our high speed trains. Europe is already proceeding on this basis.
- ERTMS Level 2 is not proven to work.

With the system still in development, the ERTMS level 2 system would not be on the UK's railways until at least 2015. Looking at what has happened to the West Coast Main Line (WCML) and the Channel Tunnel rail link, it is likely that the costs will double or even treble and the chances of this system being implemented on time are remote.

The HSC's own statistics say that with TPWS and TWPS+, the current safety systems being installed on the railways, the probability of a train going through a red light would be 1 in every 10 years. Using these statistics, there is the potential for another two disasters to happen. It is also probable that these statistics are flawed, as recent figures show that although there is a general decline in the number of SPADs, the serious SPADs (severity levels 3 to 8, e.g. a potential serious crash with death and injury) have remained at a steady level since our crash. This is simply not acceptable.

The HSC talk about capacity, fitment and development. It seems to forget fatalities, injuries and the fact, as we are proof of, that lives that are torn up and destroyed forever by the lack of immediate action and on advice such as this.

The HSC also give the impression that they consulted with bereaved and survivors and that an agreement was reached. This is most certainly not the case. The members of PSG (81 survivors) reject the proposal of waiting for ERTMS 2 entirely.

Colin Field (a member of the PSG) said "This appears to be a fudge between the Government, the rail industry, and the HSC not to spend money. It is wishful thinking that the system will work and be delivered on time".

We do welcome the fact that TPWS+ is well on the way to being fitted, but must say that if this is the 'stop gap', then all trains should run at 75mph until such time as an appropriate High Speed Train system is fitted and public safety is assured.

We strongly urge Alistair Darling to consider this release seriously, and we will be making a formal representation to the Secretary of State accordingly.

End.

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