Personal Track Safety

08

The COSS/SWL briefing

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Introduction

Understanding your brief is hugely important if you're going to stay safe.

Here's Steve, the Controller of Site Safety (COSS), to tell you what you'll cover in this PDF.

> "I thought we could look at a safety briefing – similar to what you'd get in real life before you start work on the tracks.
>
> As you'll see, it's very thorough – just as it needs to be."

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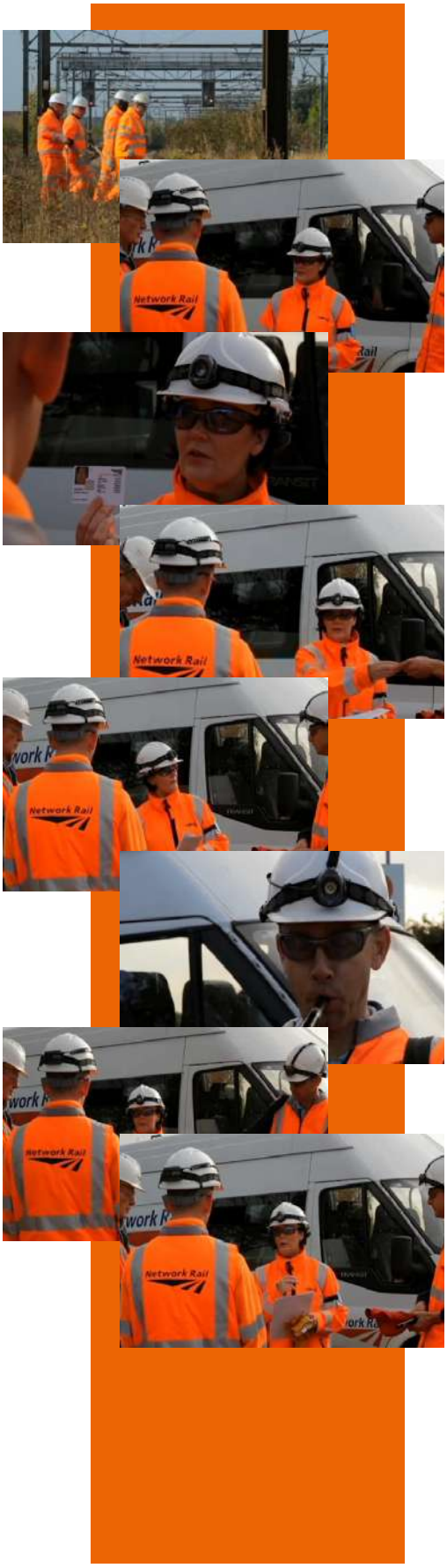
A COSS briefing

If you're walking in a group of two or more people on or near the line, you must be accompanied by a controller of site safety, known as a COSS. Their role is to make sure that nobody is put in danger from electrification equipment or from trains.

On most occasions, there will also be a person in charge. Their role is to make sure the work is carried out to the standard required, and to make sure that a safe system is in place before it begins. Sometimes the person in charge will also be a certified COSS, and may carry out both roles themselves.



Let's imagine a scenario.

On a job to renew an insulated block joint, Donna is the COSS. She begins by showing her team her Sentinel card, and asking to see everyone else's. The area they're working in has two lines. The method of protection used will be site warden with the line they are working on blocked, though the other line will be open and trains can approach from either direction. She also tells them the speed of travel on both lines. If any of Donna's team cross the protection limit, the site warden will issue an initial warning in the form of a shout. If a team member does not acknowledge the initial warning and move to a position of safety, an urgent warning in the form of a series of short, sharp blasts on the horn will be issued.

Signal protection is also in place, and Donna tells the team which signal box is the controlling box. She tells them the extent of the signal protection that they have in place. Donna has the telephone number of the signaller programmed into her cell phone. Donna is also a fully qualified first aider, and the team have a first aid kit with them. It is in the warden's bag, and Donna has checked that it's complete. She also tells her team where the nearest hospital is located, in case of serious injury. She has the hospital's number programmed into her telephone. She tells the team where this area is controlled from, and tells them where her phone is located (her right leg trouser pocket) in case they need to use it.

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Donna then tells the team that there are some hazards on site. Due to heavy rains, the ballast is slippery. There are also a lot of cable stumps on this site, which are easy to trip over. The ballast shoulder is new and quite high. Due to it being new, there is still some movement on it. It is a non-electrified area so no isolation limits are needed.

The site warden asks Donna to clarify the direction of the down line, and she indicates this to him.

After the briefing, Donna asks each person to sign the record of arrangements and briefing form to indicate that they have understood, or if they have any more questions to ask. On some occasions, the safe system in place may need to be changed. The COSS will stop the work, move everyone to a position of safety, and then brief everyone on the new safe system of work.

Always comply with any briefings or instructions from the COSS, or you could be endangering your or you work mates' lives.

everyone
home safe
every day

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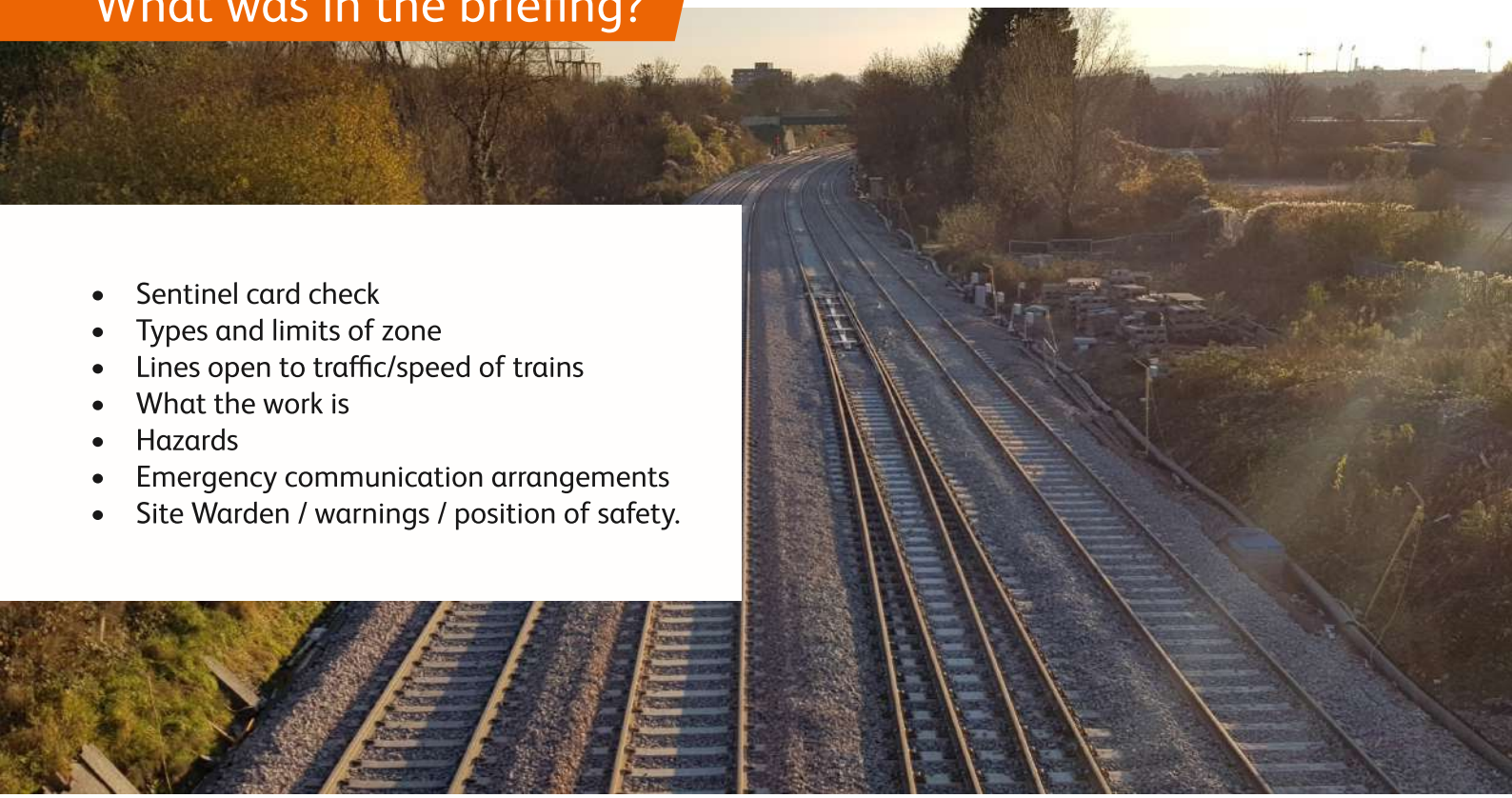
What was in the briefing?



- Sentinel card check
- Types and limits of zone
- Lines open to traffic/speed of trains
- What the work is
- Hazards
- Emergency communication arrangements
- Site Warden / warnings / position of safety.

> “Donna covered all the points with the exception of two – inexperienced workers, and access points and routes to site. The first she didn’t need to cover because her team are all qualified. However, she should have covered the second.”

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Covering the essentials

Your briefings will contain most of the same points. So let's recap how the COSS explained them.

Everyone on track needs to produce their **Sentinel card** before they start working. If you have a new-style card, the COSS will probably scan it with a smartphone.

"We're going to be **working on…**" The COSS explains what the work is.

She tells the team which **line** is blocked and protected and which one is **open to traffic**. For both, it's important to know the **maximum speed** of the trains that run on the lines.

She introduces the **designated Site Warden**, describes the **methods of warning** and points out the **position of safety**.

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Covering the essentials

She discusses **first aid** arrangements and tells the team how to contact the **Emergency Services**.

She identifies the **hazards** – uneven cess, slippery terrain, trip hazards, new ballast shoulder.

She finishes by giving the team an opportunity to ask questions, to make sure they'd understood the briefing. Then she asks them to sign the form before they start work.

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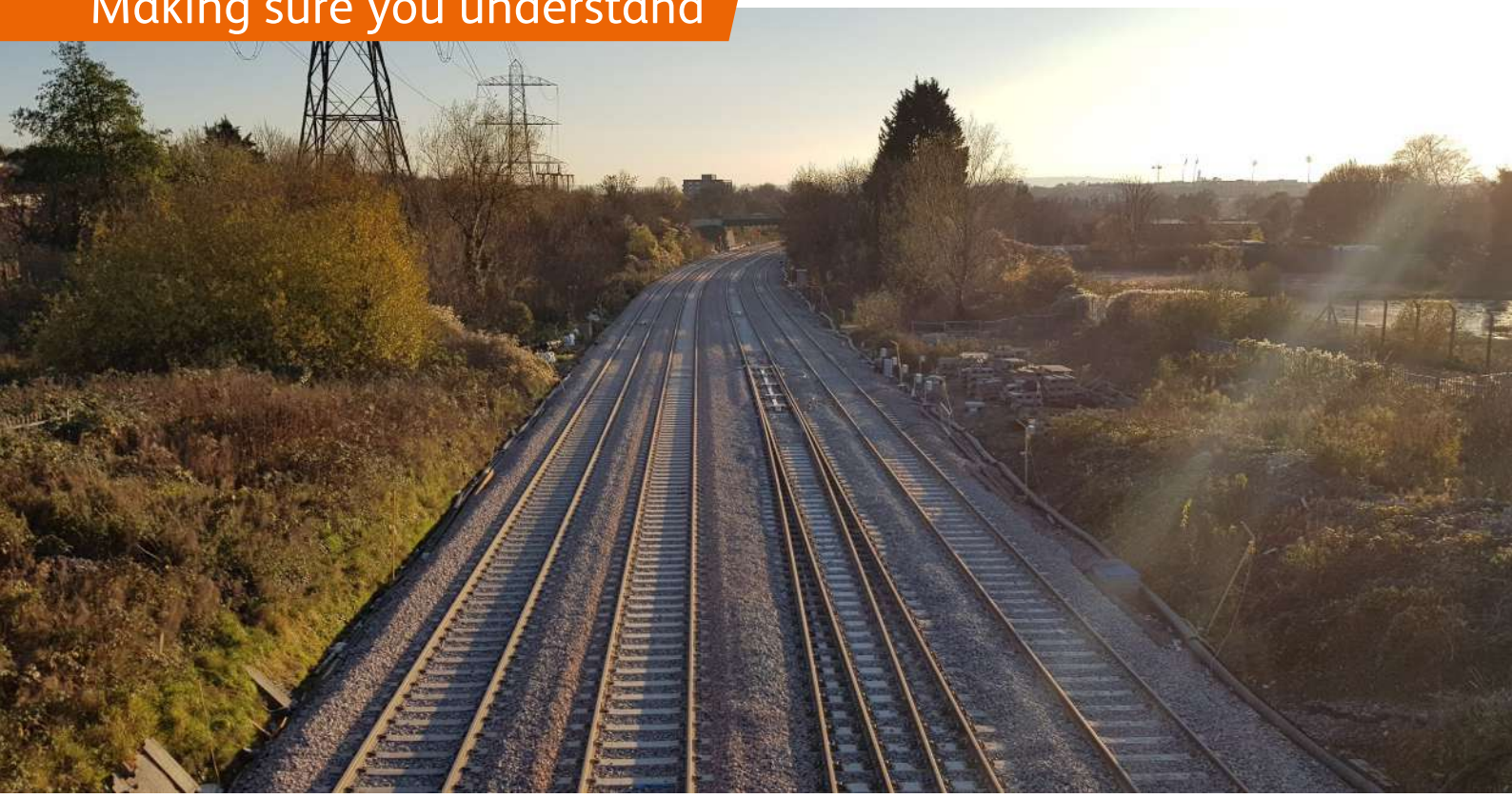
Making sure you understand



It's very important that you feel comfortable about asking the COSS or Safe Work Leader to clarify anything you don't understand.

You've received the **safety briefing checklist**, and you need to feel confident that all the items have been covered. If you aren't, ask the COSS or Safe Work Leader to make things clear before signing the form and starting work.

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Your COSS/Safe Work Leader briefing

Here's another example of a COSS briefing, this time from Steve himself.

"Hi everyone. Can I start this briefing by checking your **Sentinel cards**?

All in order – thanks. Just to remind the old timers, we've got a couple of inexperienced workers with us today – they're the ones in the blue hats. So we need to look out for them. Now, if I can ask you to look towards the railway lines. We're going to be working on the Down line – that's the one closest to us. The normal speed limit on this line is 70 miles an hour, but it's blocked and protected while we carry out the work.

The **Up line will remain open**, and it has a **speed limit** of 100 miles an hour. The limit of the work area is the 6-foot rail on the Down line, so do not go beyond that limit, as the Up line is open. Liz is the **Site Warden**. If anyone does get out of these limits, she will shout the **warning** "Get back".

If anyone is mad enough to ignore Liz's warning, she will blow a series of short sharp blasts on her horn. Also remember that the Up line is open, so please stop and acknowledge any approaching trains.

Now, the work itself. We're going to be working on the **Down line**, replacing fastenings on the cess side only. We'll **access the area** by the pedestrian gate and walk in the Down line cess for 30 metres. We will stay in the cess until the line blockage is in place. I will let you know that work can start.

Hazards – the cess is uneven underfoot. Also, there may be loose cables, so watch your step.

Emergency communications – there's a signal telephone at Tango 199, which is 200 metres down the Down line. I also have the relevant numbers programmed into my mobile phone, which is in my right coat pocket. Obviously if it's a serious emergency, call 999. I think that's all, but if there's anything you think I've missed, or aren't clear about – please ask now. Does anyone have any questions?"

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Safe work limits

A **Site Warden** is the person that will give you a warning if you stray towards an open line or outside the agreed work limits.

Although it is possible for a COSS to also be a Site Warden on the same job, they must tell you this as part of their briefing.

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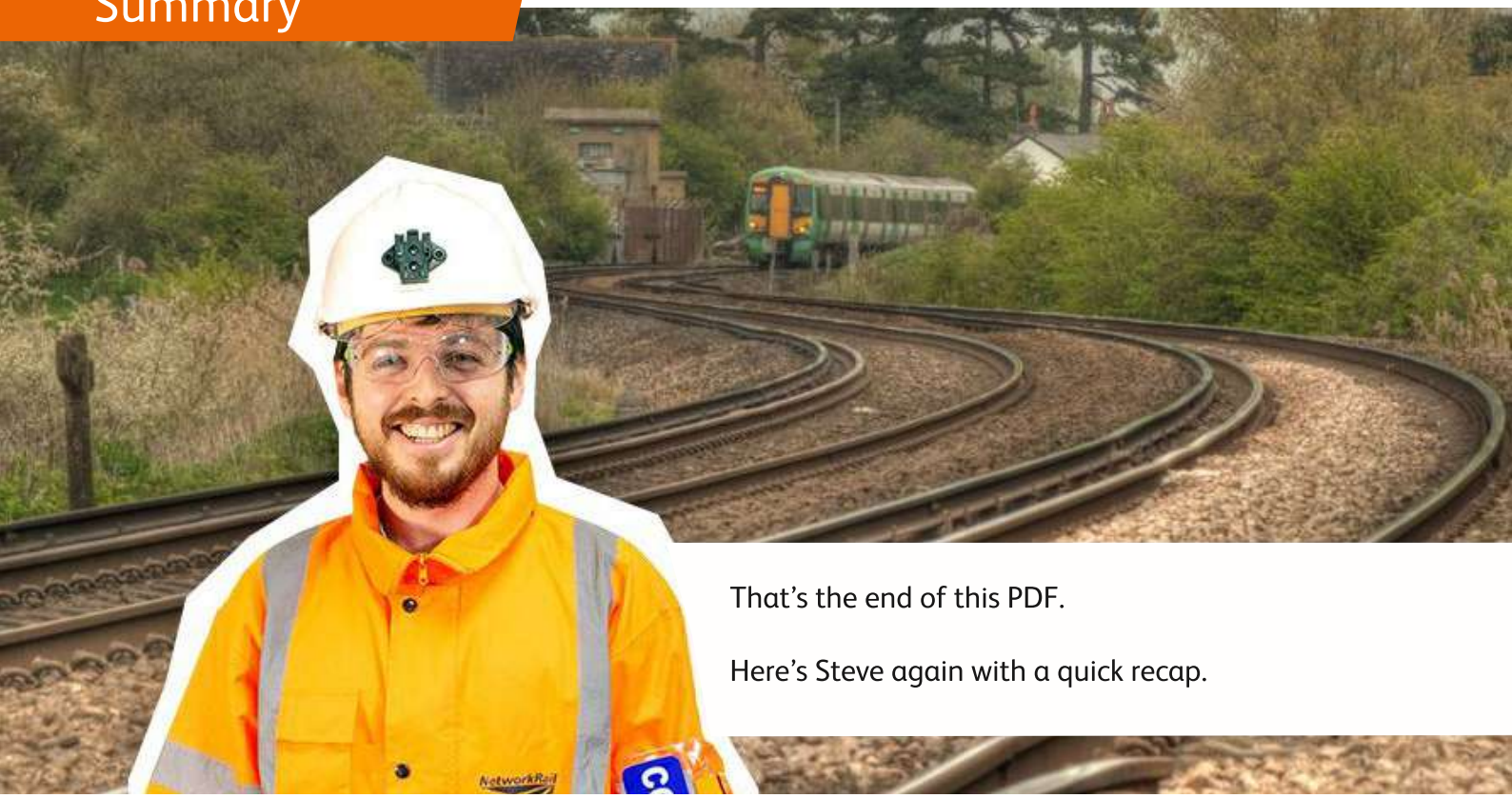
Summary



That's the end of this PDF.

Here's Steve again with a quick recap.

"When receiving your brief, you must listen carefully.
But you also have to be confident enough to ask questions and seek clarification if required. We all have off days – even an experienced COSS or Safe Work Leader like me.

If you're not sure about anything the COSS or Safe Work Leader has told you – or if there's something you know they haven't told you – ask them.
Don't stay silent!

You might think you're not allowed to challenge the person in charge, but you can and should if you're not sure. By spending five minutes to make sure everyone understands something, you may save a life.

That's the end of this part of the Personal Track Safety (PTS) learning. Please read the other PDFs or e-learning topics in this course before you take the online Assessment."