



Recovering from a major incident

Andy Barr MBE, London Underground's Network co-ordination manager, spoke to IRO South East members about how the system recovered from the terrorist bombing attacks. Words by John Glover

As described last month, the terrorist attacks of 7 July 2005, took place and the emergency services arrived. What should London Underground be doing next?

CONSEQUENCE MANAGEMENT

The aim of consequence management is to protect the business as best it can and determine how to get it going again. It isn't only London Underground that needed to get back to normal; there are effects on the Stock Exchange, and income in south-east England generally if the Underground isn't working.

The challenges on this Thursday were:

- London Underground got more than 3m people into London that morning; how are they all going to get back home?
- With trains scattered all over the network, how are drivers going to reach them to get the trains back to the depots?
- How many staff will be needed on late shift, given that there are no services, and how are they going to get to and from work?

The easy element was to arrange ticket acceptance by the Tocs that were not directly affected. 'This', said Mr Barr proudly, 'was the first time that Heathrow Express had accepted Underground tickets.'

If the Tube stops running, it affects the local economy.



Transport for London

Meanwhile bus services outside the central area were running.

Nevertheless, despite all the difficulties, 80 per cent of normal Underground operation was restored the following day, Friday 8 July. This was very well received by the customers and an immense help in restoring confidence all round.

PRIORITIES

The priority actions were as follows:

- Care and welfare of all the people involved, including staff. Thus for each of the deaths and injuries there might be four, five or six loved ones who need care afterwards;
- Retention of evidence. This was the biggest challenge. The Metropolitan Police sealed

stations to preserve the sites; and

- Engineering response to the immediate incidents, clearance of damaged vehicles and infrastructure damage generally.

While the last was relatively slight at the subsurface locations, the Piccadilly Line incident was in a tube tunnel 21.3 metres below the surface. The effect of detonation meant that the train expanded and the bodywork scraped the side of the tunnel before collapsing inwards.

The train itself came to a halt around 800 metres from Russell Square and over 100 metres from King's Cross.

BUSINESS RECOVERY

Recovery is fundamental, and those involved ranked from the prime minister downwards. This

meant a series of top level meetings at the Government's strategic coordination centre. This deals with, amongst other things, planning for civil contingencies, public health and transport.

A key management role in such circumstances is external communication with staff, customers and the media alike. There is also a need for close dialogue with stakeholders and partners.

An early requirement is to make alternative transport arrangements and to cooperate with other providers to keep London moving. People making journeys with which they are less familiar are uncertain, and hence tend to move more slowly.

Additional staff need to be deployed to safeguard the resilience of services across the network as a whole. Resilience teams consider what happened, what the organisation should be doing, make known just how well the staff behaved, and let the staff representatives know what is going on.

RETURNING TO NORMAL

The strategy starts with a paramount commitment to safety, for both staff and customers. Staff requests to clean the tunnels affected were met and close working with Her Majesty's Railway Inspectorate and the

engineering partners took place. It was at all times important to explain the nature of the incidents and their impact on services.

It was also important not to raise expectations among the public which could not in the end be met. Services were reinstated in stages as rolling stock became available. Service restoration on all sections of line was completed four weeks after the event, the last being on 4 August when full Piccadilly services were restored.

AND NEXT TIME?

'Would you react the same again to another incident like this, or do it differently?' the speaker was asked.

A period of well over two years has now passed, and many things worked well, some very well.

Issues regarding security, site access and lines of command directing the incident were revisited, while links to other transport providers to aid recovery can always be improved.

Victim support and trauma counselling must not be underrated, either as an important action to be undertaken, or in terms of the resources it needs.

Moves to common communication systems are well advanced, while the inadequacy of

a station's standard orange first aid box in dealing with large numbers of injured has also been recognised. Much more comprehensive kit is now to hand at a large number of Underground stations particularly where they interface with National Rail or are major interchanges.

Overall verdict, though? 'Pretty good'.

CONCLUSIONS

London Underground is all about people, whether passengers or staff. It was the railway men and women who were the first to respond, and who did a magnificent job in that and subsequently in service restoration.

The impact on passengers and staff was fundamental, but also upon the outside world. The Underground has some virulent critics in the London press, but the whole episode changed perceptibly the public attitude to the organisation and what it offers London.

The IRO would like to thank Andy Barr for giving this informative lecture, and London Underground for their permission to publish this account.

MEMBERS' NEWS

The following employers operate a corporate membership scheme, by paying a one-off annual fee that covers all their employees' affiliate or associate membership subscriptions:

Network Rail ● Eurostar UK Ltd ● First ScotRail ● First Great Western ● One ● Railnews ● Iarnród Éireann (Irish Rail) ● EWS Railway ● Northern Ireland Railways ● First Transpennine Express ● First Capital Connect ● Atoc ● Southern ● London Underground Ltd ● Docklands Light Railway ● Transport for London ● South West Trains ● Sheffield Supertram ● Arriva Trains Wales ● Parsons Brinckerhoff ● Southeastern Railway ● Virgin Trains ● London Lines ● c2c Rail ● Gatwick Express ● RWA Rail

Those with full membership will continue to pay their subscription personally, irrespective of whether they can subsequently claim it back. Please note that, as the IRO's subscriptions are tax-deductible, a receipt will be issued for all payments – whether by cheque, standing order or internet payment.

If your company would like to explore the benefits of corporate membership of the institution, please contact us. We welcome applications from all industry companies, suppliers and associations – please contact Chris Daughton on 01444 248931 or admin@railwayoperators.org

DIARY OF EVENTS

SCOTTISH AND IRISH AREA

Date TBA: Talk on Advances In Signalling And Their Influence On Operating Rules. All meetings start at 17:30, with tea, coffee and biscuits available from 17:15. For information on all Scottish Area events please contact Chris Owen on 01506 854537 or email: scottish@railwayoperators.org

SOUTH EAST AREA

The South East Area Council would like your view on our visits programme. Mike Hill writes: 'The SE area has operated a number of visits during the last few years and would now appreciate your views, as a member, on what you would like to visit in 2007. We will try to arrange as many as we can. Send your ideas to Mike Hill at: education@railwayoperators.org All South East Area meetings take place at the Union Jack Club, Sandell Street, opposite Waterloo. Doors open at 18:00 and the talks commence at 18:30. For information on South East Area events please contact: southeast@railwayoperators.org

SOUTH WEST AREA

For information on all South West Area events please contact Lawrie Hall on 01453 822150 or email: southwest@railwayoperators.org

NORTH EAST AREA

The North East Area of The Institution of Railway Operators is pleased to announce a new season of talks and visits. It is our aim to make the talks diverse and informative, as well as providing interactive experiences. Event TBA: Refurbishment of GNER HSTs

8 January: Rail Freight, A Customer Perspective

For information on all North East Area events please contact Chris Prior on 07801 905204 or email: northeast@railwayoperators.org

NORTH WEST AREA

16 January: Provisional meeting date for NW area, venue and time TBC

11 March: Talk at Liverpool John Moores University, time TBC

16 April: Provisional meeting date for NW area, venue and time TBC
For information on all North West Area events please contact: northwest@railwayoperators.org

MIDLANDS AREA

21 January: Master Class – Possession Planning at the Mailbox, Birmingham, Board Room, Floor 11 17:30-19:00

25 February Presentation – Stagecoach on the new East Midlands Franchise at Midland Mainline's Academy, Derby 17:15-18:45

31 March Presentation – Marconi on the GSMR System at The Mailbox, Birmingham. 17:30-19:00

28 April Visit – New Track Test Train. Derby, time TBC

19 May 08 Master Class – Network Rail Infrastructure Investment at The Mailbox, Birmingham. Board Room, Floor 11 17:30-21:00.

15 June Summer visit – Severn Valley Railway. Time TBC
For information on all Midlands Area events please contact Julia Stanyard on 0121 345 3833 or email: midlands@railwayoperators.org

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

6 December: IRO Christmas Reception – an eagerly anticipated opportunity to meet other Young Professional and IRO members. The details will appear on the Young Professionals' website: www.iroyoungprofessionals.org.uk/events
We are currently compiling our 2008 programme, please keep checking the website for updates.

In the meantime, the IET London Area invites all Young Professionals to a talk entitled Powering the Railway. This will be a joint talk between the IET and IRO and will feature speakers from both organisations. For more details and to register for this event please visit www.iroyoungprofessionals.org.uk/events

We would welcome any feedback, comments or enquiries at contact@iroyoungprofessionals.org.uk