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1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this rule is to outline the protocols for Authorising and using Absolute Signal Blocking (ASB) in the Public Transport Authority (PTA) Network. This is a method of working in the Danger Zone by:

- maintaining Controlled Absolute Signals at Stop to exclude Rail Traffic from the limits of a Worksite; and/or
- where the Signal has more than one Route available apply Blocking Facilities to protect all entry points to the Worksite.

2. GENERAL

Only Train Controllers may approve ASB for Track under their control.

If a Safety Assessment shows that it is safe, some kinds of work may be done in the Danger Zone without a Work on Track Authority. ASB is one of those methods of working.

**WARNING**

If the Safety Assessment shows that a Work on Track Authority is necessary, work must not be done using the ASB method.

ASB may be used only:

- for station staff to access the Track;
- for work using equipment which can be removed from the Track by Workers without mechanical assistance;
- at Network Access Level Crossings, to allow Vehicles to cross the Track; or
- to allow Vehicles to directly cross the Track.

If ASB is used, then a Worker may work alone. In this case, that Worker is also the Protection Officer (PO):

- the ASB method of Protection must be applied to Controlled Absolute Signals; and/or
- where the Signal has more than one Route available apply Blocking Facilities to protect all entry points to the Worksite.

The ASB method must not be used for work that breaks the Track or affects Infrastructure integrity.
3. **AUTHORISATION**

Before authorising ASB working, the *Train Controller* must make sure that:

- another *Work on Track Authority* is not in use within the limits of the proposed *Worksite*;
- any *Rail Traffic* holding an *Authority for Unidirectional movement* has *Cleared* the limits of the proposed *Worksite* by confirming with the *PO* that the *Section* is *Clear*;
- *Rail Traffic* that is *Stabled* and within the limits of the *ASB*, must not be *Authorised* to move;
- the *PO* knows about any existing obstructions;
- the Kilometre locations of the limits of the *Worksite* have been identified;
- the protecting *Signals* have been identified;
- *Blocking Facilities* have been applied to prevent *Unauthorised* entry by *Rail Traffic* into the limits of the *Worksite*; and
- where the *Signal* has more than one *Route* available apply *Blocking Facilities* to protect all entry points to the *Worksite*.

**WARNING**

The *Train Controller* must not permit *ASB* if there is any doubt about the *Location* of the proposed *Worksite*.

The *Train Controller* must confirm with the *PO* the:

- name and contact details of the *PO*;
- the works program number;
- type of work; and
- *Location* using:
  - a kilometre sign and if required one of the following identifiers;
  - station name;
  - *Overhead Line Equipment* (*OLE*) structure number;
  - a *Points Identification Number*;
  - a *Signal Identification Number*;
  - an observance of *Points* or *Signal Aspect* change; or
  - permanent structures, such as a bridge, roadway or overpass used only in conjunction with one of the above identifiers.
4. PROTECTION OFFICER

There must be a PO present at the Worksite for the period of work, except if the ASB is used to allow road vehicles to directly cross the Track or where station staff are required to access the Track. In these circumstances the Train Controller may apply ASB and assume the role of the PO.

If Authorised by the Train Controller, the PO must remove and safeguard the Crank Handle.

A PO must:

- make sure that work in the Danger Zone does not begin before the required safety measures are in place;
- be responsible for the Protection of Workers from Rail Traffic;
- ensure the Worksite is for the shortest practical distance;
- identify all entry points and the kilometre location of the limits of the Worksite;
- make sure that the Worksite is protected against the entry of Rail Traffic;
- inform all workers of the limits of the Worksite; and
- tell Workers about the Location of Safe Places.

NOTE
A PO must be satisfied that other work will not interfere with Protection duties.

4.1. REQUEST FOR ABSOLUTE SIGNAL BLOCKING FROM WORKER OTHER THAN THE PROTECTION OFFICER

The Train Controller may apply ASB to allow station staff to access the Track or Vehicles to directly cross the Track.

The Train Controller must:

- confirm the Location and the work to be done;
- make sure the Route is Clear between the Protecting Signals and the proposed Worksite, and that any Rail Traffic that has passed the Worksite will not return;
- set the Protecting Signals at Stop and apply Blocking Facilities; and/or
- where the Signal has more than one Route available apply Blocking Facilities to protect all entry points to the Worksite;
- advise the Worker of the arrangements and Authorise the work; and
- when told that the area is Clear, remove Blocking Facilities.
4.2. CHANGE OF TRAIN CONTROLLER

An outgoing Train Controller must tell an incoming Train Controller about the Worksite Protection arrangements.

The incoming Train Controller must make a Permanent Record of the handover.

5. OBTAINING APPROVAL FOR ABSOLUTE SIGNAL BLOCKING

The Train Controller and the PO must confirm and record on the Absolute Signal Blocking Form:

- the kilometre Location of the Worksite;
- identify the Controlled Absolute Signals to be set and kept at STOP with Blocking Facilities applied; and/or
- where the Signal has more than one Route available, identify the Route to the Worksite and apply Blocking Facilities to protect all entry points;
- that Blocking Facilities have been applied or, where approved by the Train Controller, the Crank Handle has been removed. The purpose of this precaution is to prevent entry of Rail Traffic into the limits of the Worksite;
- the blocking Authority or identification number from the Train Control System;
- identification of the Points Secured;
- the PO’s name and contact details;
- the approving Train Controller’s name;
- the time of approval; and
- the date of approval.

When the ASB is approved the PO must put the required safety measures in place and commence work.
6. PROTECTION

**WARNING**
Work must not start in the *Danger Zone* until the required *Protection* is in place.

The PO must arrange for:

- *Controlled Absolute Signals* to be set at Stop with *Blocking Facilities* applied; and/or
- where the *Signal* has more than one *Route* available apply *Blocking Facilities* to protect all entry points to the *Worksite*; or
- *the Crank Handle* to be removed to set *Controlled Absolute Signals* at Stop.

6.1. PROTECTING SIGNAL

Where the proposed *Worksite* is within 200m of a *Protecting Signal*:

- two consecutive *Controlled Absolute Signals* must be set at Stop with *Blocking Facilities* applied; or
- one *Controlled Absolute Signals* must be set at Stop with *Blocking Facilities* applied, with:
  - *Points Secured* to prevent access; or
  - an easily reached *Safe Place* available and a *Lookout* is provided.

A *Lookout* is positioned as a secondary safety measure and does not need to comply with sighting distances as per *Rule 3013 Lookout Working*.

**WARNING**
The *Lookout* must not do any work other than look for and give *Warning* about the approach of *Rail Traffic*.

If *Rail Traffic* can approach from more than one direction, the PO must protect all *Points* of entry into the *ASB* limits.

If the *Worksite* includes the limits of a *Terminal Line* then *Protection* is not required from that direction provided the *Train Controller* and PO agree there are no *Rail Traffic* movements from that direction.

*Protection* will still need to be applied to prevent any *Rail Traffic* movements towards the end of the *Terminal Line*.

6.2. TRAIN CONTROLLER

The *Train Controller* must confirm with the PO that:

- the protecting *Controlled Absolute Signals* have been set at Stop with *Blocking Facilities* applied; and/or
• all potential Signal Routes available have had Blocking Facilities applied to protect all entry points to the Worksite;
• the Route is Clear of Rail Traffic between the Protecting Signals and the Limits of the Worksite;
• any Rail Traffic between the Protecting Signals and the limits of the ASB Worksite is contained within a Work on Track Authority; or
• any Rail Traffic that has passed Complete beyond the Worksite will not return.

**WARNING**

When a Work on Track Authority with Rail Traffic is located between the Protecting Signal and the ASB Worksite, the Train Controller must not fulfil the Work on Track Authority until:
• Rail Traffic is confirmed as clear of Track; or
• the ASB has been removed.

Train Controllers must not Authorise movements into the limits of the Worksites where ASB is in use.

6.3. **TEMPORARY REMOVAL OF BLOCKING FACILITIES**

Blocking Facilities may be temporarily removed in accordance with Rule 6003 Blocking Facilities.

6.4. **ADJACENT LINE**

If the Safety Assessment indicates that Workers need to be protected from Rail Traffic on Adjacent lines, the PO must arrange for Adjacent lines to be protected in accordance with Procedure 9010 Protecting Work from Rail Traffic on Adjacent Lines.

7. **COMMUNICATIONS WITH TRAIN CONTROL**

The PO must be the only point of contact between Train Control and Work Groups for matters of Worksite Protection.

The PO must tell affected Train Controllers about:
• the Protection arrangements;
• Protection arrangements on Adjacent lines; and
• work progress.
8. ENDING ABSOLUTE SIGNAL BLOCKING

Before ending the ASB the PO must make sure and tell the Train Controller that:
- all Workers and equipment have cleared the Danger Zone;
- Points securing devices have been removed; and
- Blocking Facilities have been removed and Infrastructure restored to normal use.

The Train Controller must make sure that the Points and Controlled Absolute Signals are working correctly after the Points have been restored to normal operation.

The PO must tell the Train Controller about operating restrictions that have been placed or removed.

9. KEEPING RECORDS

Train Controllers and the PO must keep Permanent Records about the details, including Protection arrangements and changes to the Worksite Protection arrangements.

10. REFERENCE

Rule 2007 Network Communication
Rule 6003 Blocking Facilities
Procedure 9000 Clipping Points
Procedure 9010 Protecting Work from Rail Traffic on Adjacent Lines
Procedure 9016 Written Authorities and Forms

11. EFFECTIVE DATE

1 November 2018