

Chapter 4 → Safety of Railway property viz. track, bridges as well as other fixed structures including office buildings, yards, workshops and production units

Indian Railways is the largest organisation in the country with mostly open, easily accessible and unguarded assets. These include equipments such as signalling, track, open line installations, overhead wires, yards, towers etc.. Control of criminal activity on railway premises and of railway property is important in view of the increasing movement of passengers and freight on Indian Railways. During the past five years the incidence of sabotage on railway tracks by terrorist/naxalites has increased. In 2009 there were 26 incidents of blowing up of rail tracks.

The High Level Committee on security had classified rail tracks as one of the most important railway asset whose security was of great importance. The Committee however failed to give any comprehensive suggestions regarding security of rail tracks and Over Head Equipment.

4.1 Security of Tracks

Rail tracks traverse both dense urban areas and vast rural areas and forests and are typically difficult to monitor and patrol. Maintenance of track is essential to ensure smooth running of trains and is covered under the Railways Way & Works manual. This manual provides for routine patrolling by gang men and patrolling during monsoon and heavy rainfall. As an exceptional measure Security patrolling is to be provided during periods of civil disturbances. The primary duty in this case is to protect trains against any condition of danger such as tampering of tracks or obstruction.

Protection of rail track against tampering or obstructions is the primary responsibility of the state government. The Ministry of Home Affairs clarified in 1965 that the primary responsibility for patrolling of tracks and guarding of railway bridges, vests with the State Government/Union Territories and guarding of other vulnerable installations would be undertaken by RPF. This order has been reiterated from time to time. In March 2010, the Ministry of Home Affairs again issued an advisory to all states to increase patrolling along railway tracks.

4.1.1 Sabotage Patrolling

In February 2003, the Railway Board issued instructions to 11 zones⁴ to introduce patrolling in sabotage prone areas as a new domain. These instructions were issued as an interim measure to tackle unforeseen situations by undertaking a precautionary step. These instructions directed the Zonal Railways to set up suitable machinery at the Divisional level for

⁴ CR, ER, ECR, NR, NER, NFR, NWR, SR, SCR, SER and WR

institutionalising the co-ordination mechanism with the State Government to ensure safety of passengers and running of trains in sabotage prone areas. These instructions included formation of a Standing Committee in each division consisting of ADRM⁵ (as Presiding Officer), Sr.DSC⁶ (as Convener), Sr.DEN⁷/Co-ordination (as Member) and Sr.DOM⁸/IC (as Member). This committee was to meet frequently and identify sabotage prone areas. They were to coordinate with the State Government and request them to provide patrolling in these areas and also supplement their efforts. Further, surprise mobile patrolling teams (consisting of both RPF and gangmen) were to be formed in each division. In addition, measures such as reduction of train speed, running of pilot engine ahead of certain trains, running of goods trains ahead of certain trains/group of trains, etc. were to be implemented whenever required.

Audit observed the following:

- Standing Committees had been formed in all divisions of CR, NR, SCR, SR, SER, NER and NFR. In ECR the same had been formed in three out of five divisions. In ER out of the two divisions test checked the Standing Committee had been formed only in one division. No Standing Committees have been formed in NCR and NWR. While regular meetings were being held in SR, SER, NR and NFR, the same were not being held regularly in ECR.
- Regarding patrolling, it is seen that the instructions issued by the Railway Board were not being uniformly implemented. Though joint patrolling was being carried out on the basis of threat perception availability of manpower.
- Joint patrolling is being carried out only in Chunar – Chopan section of Allahabad division of NCR, as it has been identified as sabotage prone area.
- In NR, joint patrolling of the sabotage prone area is being done in one division only and in CR it is being done in two divisions.
- In SCR, the same is being done wherever necessary based on the intelligence wing output.
- Instructions have been issued by WR administration to introduce track patrolling along with the engineering staff in the sabotage prone area. As a precautionary measure, joint patrolling is done in Mhow-Khandwa section and Meghnagar – Dahod section by the joint team of Engineering, RPF and Signalling & Telecommunication departments. Coordination Committee is functioning in Ratlam and Bhavnagar divisions.
- It was noticed that in ECR, NFR surprise night track patrolling was not being done on regular basis due to shortage of staff. In ER, the gang-men

⁵ ADRM-Additional Divisional Railway Manager

⁶ Sr. DSC – Senior Divisional Security Commissioner

⁷ Sr. DEN-Senior Divisional Engineer

⁸ Sr. DOM-Senior Divisional Operating Manager

of engineering department conduct night track patrolling in vulnerable areas. In exigencies, special patrol trains rush to the area immediately.

- In ECoR, patrolling is being done as and when required.
- In SER, patrolling by gang men has however been intensified but no surprise patrolling is being carried out by security personnel as sabotage in Maoist infested areas was normally not in the form of thefts/tampering of railway track fittings/signal gears etc. Track sabotage, normally occurred during pre- announced bandh-calls/protests etc.

4.1.2 Limitations of Track Patrolling

Given the gigantic size of the rail network of the Indian Railways, physical patrolling in motorised trolleys and on foot can be possible only in selective sensitive stretches. Technical solutions for monitor ring railway tracks over a much larger area need to be resorted to in sensitive areas.

4.2 Impact on Safety

Despite the above measures, the incidence of sabotage has increased in the past one year. Railway accidents due to sabotage have increased from 5 in 2005-06 to 14 during 2009-10.

Railways have indicated that there were 26 incidents of blowing of railway track etc. in 2009 as against 11 in 2008. The revenue loss in goods traffic in Eastern Railway alone was ` 25.38 crore during the period 2008-09 to November 2010 due to naxalite/maoist activities.

Two major incidents of train derailment occurred in 2010. The Rajdhani Express was derailed in Bihar's Gaya district in March 2010. The Commissioner of Railway Safety, Eastern Circle, Kolkata concluded that the derailment was due to explosion of bomb on the track.

In another case, the Jnaneswari Express derailed and collided with a goods train running in the opposite direction on the adjacent track on 28 May 2010. 150 passengers (including four staff) died while 168 passengers and two staff were injured in this accident. Complete rail traffic was stopped for two days in the section. The Railway Safety Commissioner (CRS) confirmed that the accident on the Jnaneswari Express was caused by tampering of track and attributed the cause as sabotage.

Examination of records revealed that the Railway Board on 24th and 25th May 2010, had advised the Zonal Railways to take adequate precaution to protect Railway property against any subversive activities in view of the Maoist's call for observance of Kala Saptaha from 28 May to 2 June 2010. Further, specific intelligence reports regarding possible attack on railway property were also received. It appears that the IR had not taken any action to secure the track other than imposing a speed restriction of 75 kmph as a precautionary measure. Despite there being a temporary speed restriction of 75 kmph in the section, the train was running at a speed of 96 kmph. A pilot engine was not run on this

track, though a convoy of trains had passed on this track less than an hour earlier.

Jnaneswari Express Accident and collision with Goods Train



The Railways have incurred an expenditure of ` 5.60 crore towards ex-gratia payment to the relatives of identified dead and injured passengers, besides the loss of revenue due to stoppage of traffic on this section for more than 48 hours.

4.3 Rail Roko Agitations

The Indian Railways is a symbol of the central government and hence is the target of many agitators who have a grievance against the state/ central government. They are frequently successful in halting train movements- both passenger and freight for long periods. This not only leads to loss of revenue to the railways but also holds the local population to ransom due to problems in commuting and shortage of supplies. During the past one year there have been a number of agitations which have targeted the railways and led to disruption of rail traffic for long periods. This includes cancellation\ diversion of trains leading to loss of substantial revenue.

The State Police have been frequently unsuccessful in preventing large scale disruption to rail traffic during the periods of agitation by specific groups like

the Gujjar agitation and the recent Jat agitation. From April to December 2010, there had been 115 cases of 'rail roko' agitations few of which were spread over a period of three weeks. More than 1500 passenger trains had to be cancelled, and another 1500 diverted over longer routes and more than 3500 re-scheduled on account of such disruptions. During 2010 the railways have lost about ` 504.62 crores on account of these agitations.

IR in its reply in May 2010 stated that it is the statutory responsibility of the State Government concerned to ensure smooth and safe running of trains. Further, IR also brought out that Standing Committees consisting of ADRM, Sr.DSC, Sr. DEN & Sr. DOM are functioning at Divisional level of the Zonal Railways. IR stated (July 2011) that presently, security of tracks, bridges and tunnels in the Jammu & Kashmir and affected sections of Northeast Frontier Region and Left Wing extremist affected area is undertaken by respective state governments.

Audit observed that the secured running of trains is not being ensured at all times indicating a greater need for cooperation with the state governments. Further, Audit observed that Standing Committees have not been set up in all the divisions in ECR, ER, NCR and NWR.

4.4 Security in Railway Establishments

With the heightened threat perspective in Indian Railways, all Railway establishments are also vulnerable to terrorist attacks. A review in Audit of the security arrangements in some of the important establishments like General Manager (GM)'s office, Railway Hospitals, Workshops, Yards, Passenger Reservation System (PRS) servers etc. of the Zonal Railways revealed the following:

- Out of 15 General Manager's offices checked, security guards were posted at all the entry points in only ten⁹ zones and Metro Kolkata. In the remaining zones all the entry points were not guarded. Armed guards were posted only at four zones (SR, NER, CR & ER) and Metro Railway. Private security guards were provided at three zones (SECR, SCR & NCR). In SCR both private security and RPF guards were deployed at the GM's office building. No proper screening of visitors was taking place as DFMDs were provided only at five zones (NER, CR, SCR, NFR & NR) and Metro Kolkata.
- No guards were deployed in five zones (SWR, NER, NWR, WR & ECR) out of 17 Railway hospitals examined. Security guards were not armed in any zone except in NFR. Though private security guards were deployed in six zones (ECoR, SECR, NCR, SCR, WCR & NR), they were not armed. In NR the Central Hospital at New Delhi was being guarded by both private security and RPF.

⁹ SR, NER, SER, SECR, SCR, ER, ECR, NFR, WCR, NR.

- Similarly in 19 workshops and 22 yards in the Zonal Railways examined by audit it was noticed that though RPF guards were deployed, in most of the places they were found unarmed.



Ghorouri Yard. Pune open from all sides

Further, some yards were found open from all sides with no fencing and boundary wall at all.

4.4.1 Criminal cases on Railway Premises

As per the RPF Act the protection and safeguarding railway property and railway premises is entrusted to RPF. The table below gives the position of the crime reported on railway premises.

Year	Work shop/ Prod. Units	Yard/ Goods Shed	Construction sites	Cash Duty	Railway Stations	Admin. Buildings	Residential colonies	Others	Total
2005-06	280	1972	1	14	5368	16	11	18295	25957
2006-07	162	1500	16	4	7348	13	7	24256	33306
2007-08	153	2108	31	11	8998	18	17	34156	45492
2008-09	140	1867	31	9	8852	22	6	36455	47382
2009-10	96	1748	5	7	9201	8	15	42924	54081

Source:-Figures furnished by Zonal Railway

From the above table it seen that the total crime rate has more than doubled in the last five years. The places most vulnerable to crime are Railway Stations and Goods shed/Yards. However the deployment of RPF at these places has not been modified in accordance with the increase in crime rates. The deployment at workshops and production units was 2366 in 2005-06 and was only slightly

reduced to 2279 in 2009-10 (reduction of only four per cent), while the crime rate in workshops and production units declined by 65 per cent in 2009-10. Similarly the crime rate at Railway stations increased from 5368 in 2005-06 to 9201 in 2009-10 (increase of 71 per cent), whereas the deployment of RPF at stations was 9345 in 2005-06 which increased to only 10687 in 2009-10 (increased by 14 per cent only).

Though the RPF is empowered to investigate and raid the suspect's premises and arrest culprits, the detection of theft/pilferage cases is not very satisfactory. The details of theft cases and their detection available in fifteen zones (ER, SR, SCR, NFR, NWR, ECoR, WCR, NCR, NER, NR, SWR, WR, ECR, SER and CR) and Metro/Kolkata for the last five years are as follows:

Sl.No.	Year	No. of cases registered	No. of cases detected	Percentage of detection on cases registered	Value of property stolen (in crores of `)	Value of property recovered (in crores of `)
1	2005-06	9214	5334	57.89	3.33	2.35
2	2006-07	7846	5409	68.93	4.05	3.00
3	2007-08	8142	5489	67.42	3.43	2.42
4	2008-09	7317	4990	68.20	5.39	3.47
5	2009-10	5540	4018	75.53	3.66	2.64

It is seen from the above table that the percentage of detection of cases ranged only between 58 per cent and 76 per cent. A further review revealed that the percentage of detection of cases had never gone beyond 39 per cent in ER in the last five years. Similarly full value of the property could not be recovered in any of the years.

4.5 Compensation Claims

As per the Railways Act, 1989, the IR is responsible for the loss/destruction, or non-delivery of animals or goods delivered to the administration for carriage by railway. Their loss/destruction not only involves claims for compensation but also results in loss of public goodwill. Audit observed that all cases lodged with the Railway Claim offices were not registered with the RPF. Out of 81834 claim cases lodged with Railway claim offices in nine¹⁰ zones only 1341 cases (1.64 per cent) were finally registered with the RPF and the same were investigated. In other zones the position of cases registered with RPF were not made available. It is evident from the above figures that all the claim cases were not registered with the RPF. The reasons for not registering all the claims lodged with the RPF are not clear.

As per Para 2101 of Indian Railway Commercial Manual, reduction in claims is one of the indices of efficiency of the Railways and every efforts should be made to reduce the Railway claims bill. The compensation paid by Railways

¹⁰ SR, SWR, SER, SECR, CR, NCR, SCR, WR, NFR.

during the period 2005-10 for death and injury in train accidents as well as for the damage /theft of goods carried by it is indicated below.

(` in crore)

Year	Compensation paid by Railways for	
	Death /Injury in train accidents	Loss of goods carried
2005-06	2.22	17.59
2006-07	5.01	14.71
2007-08	1.21	9.85
2008-09	2.66	6.40
2009-10	4.85	13.99

Source:-Year Book Indian Railways

It is seen that the compensation paid by Railways has been fluctuating widely. During 2009-10 payment of compensation increased substantially for both death/injury cases and loss of goods carried indicating a decline in one of their efficiency indices.

4.6 Disposal of empty cartridges

Railway Board issued guidelines in September 2006 elaborating the procedure for disposal of empty fired cartridges lying with RPF. The empty cartridges were to be disposed off with the approval of standing committee consisting of Financial Advisor and Chief Accounts Officer, Controller of Stores/Chief Materials Manager and CSC/RPF. The review of records revealed that in four zones¹¹ a total quantity of 36640.53 kgs and in eight zones¹² and two production units a quantity of 6380904 Nos of empty cartridges had not been disposed. Delay in disposal leads to non realisation of revenue on scrap and also unnecessary expenditure on security and custody of the scrap.

4.7 Conclusion

The Standing Committee on Railways of the 15th Lok Sabha had observed (August 2010) that the Indian Railways is the lifeline of the nation, but when the life of passengers and the property of the Railways themselves become a casualty in the wake of accidents etc. it is a cause of worry which warrants serious introspection.

The IR's primary responsibility is to ensure safe and smooth running of trains – both passenger and freight. For this a secure and obstruction free rail track is essential. High Level Committee had also recommended that technological solutions need to be found for ensuring better surveillance of tracks in sensitive areas. However, it has been observed that the IR has not formulated any composite plan in consultation with the state governments for ensuring safety and security of its assets especially tracks and bridges and Over Head Equipment (OHE).

¹¹ SR-17393.08kg, SCR-6706.02kg, ER-9374.44kg, NR-3167kg.

¹² NER-238390 Nos., ECoR-328284 Nos.,SER-1777788 Nos., SECR-102513 Nos., CR-1320715 Nos., WR-1310062 Nos., ECR-492317 Nos., NFR-648208 Nos., CLW-154969 Nos., DLW-7658 Nos.

Controlling of crime on railway premises/of railway property is the responsibility of the RPF. In the last five years there has been a distinct rise in the total crime rate at railway premises indicating that the RPF needs to upgrade the level of security provided at railway premises.

Recommendations

- *It is essential that the IR work out an arrangement with the State Government Authorities for adequate steps to intensify track patrolling and institutionalise the co-ordination mechanism with the State Government authorities to ensure security of passengers and running of trains in sabotage prone areas.*
- *Railways should register all claim cases with the RPF for proper investigation and apprehension of culprits.*
- *With the rise in the crime in railway premises, it is essential that RPF upgrade the level of security provided.*