

Emergency Timetables

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Photo]

[J. N. Faulkner

Portsmouth to Waterloo electric train entering New Malden on the down through line during rebuilding of the underbridge there last year

WE have all, at one time or another, seen a poster bearing the wording "Due to engineering works, the following train alterations will apply," or "Owing to a mishap at —, British Railways regret passengers are subject to delay." The issue of the above posters calls for the production of emergency timetables, and these can be placed in two categories: (a) for pre-arranged re-routing and diversions of trains to cater for major engineering works; and (b) those needed after a mishap.

In the first case, meetings are held between representatives of the Engineers' and Operating Departments to review details of the major engineering works required during the following three and six months, and at which it is mutually agreed in principle the length of time the Engineer will take absolute possession of the lines he requires. Modern methods of carrying out the work, and the introduction of rapid-drying cement, have resulted in applications for 18- or 36-hour possessions, and although such lengthy possessions naturally have a drastic effect on the train services, it does enable the work to be completed in (say) one weekend, compared with possibly two or three hitherto. Therefore the inconvenience to the travelling public is considerably lessened. The responsibility

for arranging emergency services in connection with such works rests with the District Traffic Superintendent in whose area they are taking place.

In the case of work involving very considerable alteration to the train service, the District Traffic Superintendent would call a meeting attended by members of the various departments, including Engine Diagramming & Rolling Stock. The Area Traffic Inspector would also be in attendance. At this meeting the following questions are decided: (a) can retiming of trains enable the full service to operate?; or (b) if this is not possible, what reductions in the service will be necessary, and what alternative road conveyances, if any, will be required?

Let us assume that some 25 per cent. reduction in the train service will be necessary. This could be achieved by diverting fast trains *via* an alternative route, wherever possible, and arranging for local branch services to be withdrawn and substituted by a shuttle service. In the case of a complete closure of lines, trains work to the nearest station on each side of the obstruction and reverse, and a special service of buses operates between the two stations. The provision of these buses to convey the passengers is not the only factor requiring consideration; it may well be that bicycles,

perambulators, newspapers and mails are loaded in the guards' vans, and therefore lorries must be available.

Having decided the frequency of service, the District Traffic Superintendent's staff proceed to prepare the timetable and work out schedules for the diversions and retimings necessary. These are then included in the weekly special traffic notice, or a special supplementary notice. In the case of the latter, if time is available, a small number of proof copies is printed and sent to certain stations and staff with a request they be examined and returned to the district officers with any amendments or additions considered necessary.

on the site, to decide what emergency arrangements are necessary to get traffic moving as quickly as possible.

Mishaps likely to block running lines are many and varied; they include derailments, engine failures, earth slips, and broken rails. The first step is to see that the train or trains brought to a stand behind the obstruction or, in the case of blockage of both lines, on each side of the obstruction, are moved at the first opportunity and passengers detrained at the nearest convenient point and provided with alternative means of transport.

If the obstruction is likely to be of short duration, it may be preferable for

Mr. W. H. Duck (seated) planning emergency timetables from diagrams and engineering notices



We now come to the very important feature of letting the public know that on a certain date the train services will be disrupted by engineering works, and posters are prepared by the Publicity Department advising passengers of what is taking place. Pamphlets are only issued in the case of major works requiring widespread alterations. A brief outline is given in the Press.

We must now consider the arrangements that have to be made when a sudden emergency arises. The first advice of a mishap resulting in the blockage of running lines is received in the District Traffic Superintendent's Train Supervision Office, frequently referred to as "control," and it is the responsibility of the clerk in charge, acting in close contact with the person

the passengers to suffer the inconvenience of a delay and proceed after the obstruction has been removed; but if the blockage is likely to be a lengthy one, then the train or trains are drawn back to the station in the rear under the authority of a wrong-line order form, and passengers are detrained and provided with alternative means of transport. The train is disposed of to the best advantage; it may either run empty to the nearest depot, or be used for a passenger service.

In the case of a blockage of lines by mishap, the emergency services must be arranged by telephone. If all lines are obstructed, trains are worked to the nearest station on each side of the obstruction and reversed, and a special

bus service provided between the two stations. Should only one line be blocked, single-line working is introduced, although in the inner suburban area, where services are frequent, it may be more advantageous to turn trains back at stations on each side of the obstruction and provide a bus service between the two stations; this minimises delay.

While the clerk in charge of "control" is arranging the emergency working, other staff are telephoning all stations in the district and other district "controls" to give details of the mishap and particulars of the emergency service it is proposed to operate, so that all stations can exhibit a public notice. If the blockage is likely to be of considerable duration, a detailed emergency timetable is drawn up and issued.

The foregoing is a brief outline of the

arrangement necessary, and takes no account of the upset to drivers' and guards' rosters, and rolling stock balance, as a result of a mishap and introduction of emergency services. The balancing of stock at the end of the day, to ensure all stock is in the correct place for starting the following day's service, and ensuring that drivers and guards are not stranded away from their "home" stations at the end of the day, calls for much skilful planning.

This article outlines the work of the office staff, but full tribute must be paid to all those engaged on the actual engineering works, or clearing the lines after a mishap. The men are called on in all weather conditions, and it is because of their efforts that the satisfactory working of the programme arranged by the planning staff is possible.