

RMT up front



The newsletter for London Underground drivers

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Seconds out... round two!



The success of the last strike and the continuing overtime ban has shocked LU management.

They assumed that the months of brain washing – “the job cuts are necessary and inevitable” - would convince ordinary tube workers not to take action. This has backfired on them big time.

The support from RMT, TSSA and some ASLEF members has been overwhelming. Services were hammered on the day. LU were left to stretch the truth to the limit through the media: a couple of trains on the District and Central Lines were euphemistically termed, part-suspended; the Queen’s Park – Elephant and Castle shuttle was no such thing, it was more like an express train there were that many stations closed.

However, the biggest shock to management has been the effectiveness of the overtime ban. Daily, tube stations are being forced to close daily because of “staff shortages” and huge engineering projects have had to be cancelled costing the company millions of pounds.

Management are also keeping stations open even when the numbers are below the minimum staffing levels in breach of safety standards.

All major engineering works scheduled for the weekend of 25/26th of October had to be cancelled. Works hit by the overtime ban included major re-railing between White City and Marble Arch, as well as all work on signalling systems.

The union has calculated that the cost to LU of the cancellations is already at least £15 million, cancelling out the saving the company claims it will make by removing 800 front-line staff.

It has also come to light that LUL are apply for and obtaining concessions to the normal safe way of working from LU’s own engineers and backed up from their mates over at the ORR. If you can’t meet the standard, make another one up, that seems to be LU’s policy these days. The District and Met Lines appear to be doing just that at the moment. They are playing Russian roulette with our safety and the safety of the travelling public.

The RMT has proof that train brake blocks, cab equipment, PA, chassis brackets and other critical equipment, supposed to be inspected at 14-day intervals have not been inspected for at least 22 days. Yet these trains have not been taken out of service as operating rules require. It is ironic that at a time when LUL bosses are sacking drivers for minor infringements of company policy, they themselves are putting the lives of passengers and staff at risk by ripping up core safety rules. One rule for us, no rules for them!

RMT and TSSA have been willing to suspend the industrial action if management show that they are prepared to negotiate seriously. Unfortunately, management have been more interested in playing politics and making up stories for the press rather than resolving the dispute. However, last week management did call the unions to talks at ACAS which suggests that the strength of the strike is giving them second thoughts about their cuts.

Everybody out on October the 4th! Keep the overtime ban going!

All members are instructed not to book on for any shifts commencing between 18.29 hours on Sunday 3rd October until 18.28 hours on Monday 4th October

One union for drivers - All grades united

Bend it like Beckham!

Becks can bend a ball but not half as much as LU can bend standards and procedures



Remember the disgraced tycoon Robert Maxwell? He used to ask his legal advisors for their legal opinion; if he didn't like their answer, he'd sack them, and get a new legal advisor. He'd repeat the process until he got the opinion he wanted. LU is no better. They have standards to ensure health and safety is maintained, if they don't have enough staff to ensure standards and procedures are carried out correctly, they just bend the rules to suit them.

Staff shortages, as a result of the overtime ban by depot staff, have left LU unable to comply with their own rolling stock standards with regards to trip-cock testing on 'A' stock trains. No problem to LU; just bend it like Beckham and apply to 'yourself' for a concession to your own safety standards. You couldn't make this stuff up if you tried.

As a result of this concession, some trains on the Met might not get their trip-cock tested for up to 48 hrs. The risks here is obvious: if the trip-cock fails to operate following a SPAD, we have disasters waiting to happen.

To add insult to possible injury, when the local reps queried the wisdom and legitimacy of this unsafe way of work, LU produced a new document, previously unseen and never consulted upon, that claimed that trains could run for up to 48 hours without trip-cock testing under the following circumstances: special timetable operation, abnormal service patterns and failure of trip-cock testers. That just about covers every eventuality. And get this, the document goes on to say that should LU require longer than 48 hours they will assess this on a case by case basis.

It's no surprise that this previously unseen document has been signed off by the Operational Standards team, the people who attempted to bring in the Operational Effectiveness Programme. Have these people gone to war on safety?

We at the RMT are old fashioned. We like things like brakes and trip-cocks on our trains. Our head office officials will be taking this matter up with LU with some urgency.

OEP, RIP!

Common sense prevails as the Operational Effectiveness Programme is consigned to the bin.

Drivers will remember, this is the programme of works, from the Operational Standards Team, that would have you despatching blind, from LU's busiest Cat 'A' platforms, with no OPO, no assisting station staff and not a hope in hell of doing it safely.

This is the programme that wanted drivers to take passengers into sidings when they couldn't get them off the train quick enough, just to speed up the service for a minute, regardless of the safety of our staff or passengers.

This is the programme that wanted you to take sick or incapacitated passengers into the siding so they didn't cause delays.

This is the programme that wanted drivers to check the signal after a SPAD, if you had a green aspect, carry on.

The RMT have argued all along that the proposals in this programme of changes were about service recovery at the expense of safety. There is nothing wrong with looking for more efficient ways of doing things but this was a rule change too far.

Fortunately for drivers and the paying public, LU's director of safety agreed with the RMT that these proposals were just not safe. What is very surprising is why it took LU so long to come to this conclusion?

There were numerous consultative meetings, with top manager after top

manager queuing up to support this programme of change. Questions must be asked about their judgement and their commitment to the safe operation of our railway.

If LU is serious about saving money then surely questions must be asked about the amount of man hours that have been wasted on this rubbish.

Unfortunately, it will be back to the drawing board for these people, and they will be looking again at how they can squeeze every last minute out of the timetable and the driver's working day, and as these rejected proposals have shown, safety to front line staff and the paying public is a secondary consideration.

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One union for drivers - All grades united