



Mr Andy Worms

By email: [andyworms@gmail.com](mailto:andyworms@gmail.com)

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19 December 2018

Dear Mr Worms

**Information request**  
**Reference number: FOI2018/01593**

Thank you for your email of 26 November 2018, in which you requested the following information:

*'can you please give me any statistics, reports, you may have on incidents, accidents, train delays caused by people committing suicide, or attempting to commit suicide on the rails you operate?*

*Please send information about such incidents since January 1st 2017'*

I have processed your request under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

I can confirm that we hold the information you requested.

Network Rail works in partnership with the wider rail industry, Samaritans and British Transport Police to reduce suicide on the railway. We work closely with other suicide prevention experts, national agencies and charities such as Public Health England and the National Suicide Prevention Alliance.

We recognise the important role we can play in influencing and supporting a wider community-based approach to suicide prevention – addressing the challenge suicide presents to society as a whole and working with local authorities to ensure that suicide prevention strategies and measures exist for high-risk communities near the railway.

You may be interested in the information on our website at:

<https://www.networkrail.co.uk/communities/safety-in-the-community/suicide-prevention-railway/>

Please find attached data on:

- the number of attempted suicides for each month;
- the number of suicide interventions (where suicide was prevented by intervention) for each month;
- the number of incidents of suicide/suspected suicide for each month;
- high-level information on the location of each incident of suicide/suspected suicide;
- delay minutes per month attributed to fatalities or injuries caused by a person being hit by train (including non-intentional fatalities or injuries). Please note that this includes all incidents where a person was hit by a train, including suicides/suspected suicides and accidents.

Please note that a death is only categorised as a suicide following a coroner's verdict and in some cases these can take up to two years to be handed down. Additionally, an inquest may not take place for many months after a death. This means that, for some of these incidents, a coroner's verdict may not yet have been given and at that these incidents are subsequently identified as suspected suicides.

Please note that we are withholding the descriptions of two incidents and the specific location of suicides/suspected suicides under section 38(1)(a) and section 38(1)(b) of the FOIA. Information is exempt from release if its disclosure would, or would be likely to —

- (a) endanger the physical or mental health of any individual, or
- (b) endanger the safety of any individual.

I consider that the disclosure of detailed information about the nature of the incidents and the location of incidents would be likely to endanger the mental health of friends and relatives of the deceased and that of rail industry staff and passengers directly involved in them, as well as having an adverse effect on public health by increasing the potential risk of further suicides at the same locations.

## Public Interest Test

Section 38 is a qualified exemption. This means that we need to consider whether the public interest favours withholding or disclosing information.

Factors in favour of disclosure of the requested information:

- Disclosure of the requested information would provide additional openness and transparency about this subject, which is a matter of public concern.

Factors in favour of withholding the requested information:

- Disclosure of information surrounding incidents of suicide/suspected suicide would be likely to cause additional distress and anxiety to friends and relatives of the deceased, rail staff and passengers. When information is disclosed under FOIA, information is released into the public domain and can then be used or shared without any restrictions. It is likely that friends and relatives of the deceased, rail staff and passengers would be very distressed by the disclosure of such information.

- The release of the location of incidents of suicide/suspected suicide would be likely to have an adverse effect on public health, by increasing the potential risk of further suicide attempts at any of the locations. Disclosing the details of incidents would be likely to encourage anyone considering suicide to use the same approaches. This phenomenon known as 'contagion' is well researched internationally and poses a real concern.

In this instance, there is a public interest in openness and transparency which needs to be weighed against the damage that would occur to the mental health of friends and relatives of the deceased, rail staff and passengers, as well as the safety of any individual considering suicide. If Network Rail releases the requested information, it is likely that there would be harm to the mental health of friends and relatives of the deceased, rail staff and passengers and the safety of the public; the strongest public interest therefore lies in protecting the detail around the locations of suicides/suspected suicides. The balance of the public interest favours withholding detailed information about the incidents.

If you have any enquiries about this response, please contact me in the first instance at [FOI@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:FOI@networkrail.co.uk) or on 01908 782405. details of your appeal rights are below.

Please remember to quote the reference number at the top of this letter in all future communications.

Yours sincerely

Colin Bendall  
Information Officer

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### **Appeal Rights**

If you are unhappy with the way your request has been handled and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, please write to the Head of Freedom of Information at Network Rail, Freedom of Information, The Quadrant, Elder Gate, Milton Keynes, MK9 1EN, or by email at [FOI@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:FOI@networkrail.co.uk). Your request must be submitted within 40 working days of receipt of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire SK9 5AF

Web: [www.networkrail.co.uk/foi](http://www.networkrail.co.uk/foi)