

Media Release

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RailCorp confirms cause of Sydenham signalling system failure

RailCorp has released an engineer's report detailing the cause of the signalling system failure at the Sydenham signalling complex on 12 April which caused major delays for CityRail customers.

RailCorp Chief Executive Rob Mason said a detailed investigation into the cause of the failure had been completed by RailCorp's Chief Engineer.

The investigation found the failure of a computer network switch caused instability within the signalling control system and shut down the control systems to 40 per cent of the CityRail network.

"In simple terms, a computer switch failed and this failure was detected by an adjacent switch," Mr Mason said.

"This switch detected that the failed switch had started a cycle of operating and then failing. This pattern repeated.

"If the first switch had failed completely, the system would have operated in back up mode.

"Following the incident RailCorp engineers immediately checked sites using the same switches to that which caused the problem at Sydenham. Two switches were identified, also at Sydenham, and these were replaced.

"We have also enhanced monitoring of system logs for all switches at all signalling complexes for early warning of any issues and local and remote monitoring of signalling systems is now in place."

The report contains a number of recommendations designed to reduce the impact of any future signalling equipment failures. They include:

- RailCorp to inspect other critical components of the signalling system across all signalling centres;
- Upgrade of system software at Sydenham to address the failure which occurred on 12 April;
- Implementation of new standards for the replacement of system components, taking into account the importance of the component and other factors;
- Update of system procedures; and
- Further work to improve network performance to improve reliability and recovery time.

“We promised to fully investigate the cause of the Sydenham signalling incident and to review our response on the day,” Mr Mason said.

“We have already taken steps to reduce the risk of a similar failure from occurring again but we can also learn some lessons on how we responded to the incident on the day, in particular the quality and timeliness of our communication with customers and staff.

“It’s clear that we need to improve passenger communications during a major network disruption. This includes announcements at stations and on trains, as well as the information we provide to customers online.

“As a result of this incident a full review of all station incident plans will be undertaken as well as an audit of the performance of public address systems at stations.

“Again, I apologise for the major disruption that this incident caused our passengers throughout the day. This report and our review of the management of the incident will result in clear improvements customers will notice.”

Mr Mason said while the investigation into the incident was now complete, RailCorp would now begin a plan to implement each of the recommendations detailed in the report.

The report in to the Sydenham signalling incident is available at http://www.railcorp.info/publications/other_publications.

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