

Network Rail missed all punctuality targets last year



Network Rail failed to meet punctuality and performance targets Gareth Fuller/PA

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Updated 1 minute ago

Network Rail missed all of its targets for passenger punctuality in England and Wales last year, resulting in delays and cancellations for tens of millions of passengers, the rail regulator announced today.

Official figures released today showed that long-distance services, commuter trains in London and the South East and regional services around the country all performed worse than last year and below target.

The Office of Rail Regulation warned that the state-funded maintenance company risked a fine of up to £75 million unless it achieves a dramatic turn-around in performance next year.

The regulator said that Network Rail was responsible for 61 per cent of a cumulative 12.2 million minutes of delay on the railway. Train operators caused the remainder.

Passenger groups said that the figures were unacceptable and raised concern about bonuses being paid to Network Rail directors at a time when passengers are left waiting for late trains.

The performance was so bad on the busiest long-distance railway that Virgin Trains launched legal action against Network Rail because of the frequency of delays.

70,500 long-distance trains, 13 per cent of the total, were cancelled or more than 10 minutes late – 4.5 percentage points below target. Passengers traveling with Virgin on the West Coast Main Line and on East Coast services were hardest hit.

Passengers in London and the South East also endured persistent disruption with 361,000 trains cancelled or arriving more than 5 minutes late. Commuters from Kent and Sussex suffered the worst train performance and Network Rail missed its target there by 1.7 points.

Regional performance was also below target with 172,500 trains cancelled or behind schedule. The regulator raised particular concern over the resilience of overhead wires at Birmingham New Street.

It also said that Network Rail, which receives more than £3 billion of public subsidy every year to maintain the railway, does not have good enough information about the condition of its tracks, bridges and other infrastructure. It said that a backlog of maintenance work was contributing to poor track quality in parts of the country.

“Levels of punctuality for passenger services in England and Wales remain below what Network Rail has been funded to achieve,” said Richard Price, ORR chief executive. “The company has some catching-up to do to get itself back on course by the time new and, in some areas, more stretching performance targets are introduced for its next funding period between 2014-19.”

Anthony Smith, chief executive of Passenger Focus watchdog, said: "For commuters who rely on trains up to 10 times a week for their daily lives it is crucial that performance is better."

He added: "Passengers would find it bizarre frankly that any bonus at all was paid when key targets are not being met. When will passengers get their bonus of trains arriving on time?"

Network Rail announced last week that the chief executive and four directors would receive bonuses funded by the tax-payer equal to 17 per cent of their six-figure salaries.

Network Rail said that the while the number of incidents had fallen, the impact on passengers had increased because of the larger number of passengers using the railway. It blamed heavy rainfall last year.

Virgin was most affected by Network Rail failures, which were responsible for 70 per cent of its delays. Virgin said that any penalties levied on the infrastructure company should be invested in the railway rather than being paid to the Treasury.

Tony Collins, chief executive, said: "Network Rail has consistently failed to deliver what it is contracted to deliver. That has directly affected customers' experience, and their impression of rail travel."

Network Rail missed punctuality targets for freight trains by 19 per cent and risks missing efficiency targets for the five years to 2014.

The volume of bridges, tunnels and embankments that were being rebuilt was 21 per cent less than planned, while the number of broken rails had increased.

The ORR said that rail replacement buses had fallen for the third consecutive year and that passenger disruption from planned engineering work was 6 per cent above target. The railway performed well during the London Olympics and punctuality in Scotland was 93 per cent, 2.3 percentage points higher than last year and 1.1 points above target.

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 **Rodney Willett**

5 minutes ago

Those whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad - and Euripides hadn't even heard of Network Rail. Well, those in charge are surely mad so . . .

Recommend Reply

Martyn Davies

59 minutes ago

Some train companies have, in the past offered slight refunds of their season passes if they don't hit their annual targets. Given that Network Rail is the overall provider, and as I have a season ticket into London- is there a similar way that we can all claw some of this money back from them?

Recommend Reply

John Whetton

1 hour ago

So, if I have understood it properly, those bonuses are a reward for the levels of failure indicated in the article. Therefore, for an even bigger level of failure, an even bigger reward will be made.

Take out the 'olympic factor', which buoyed the company no end, and what have we got?

Recommend Reply

RICHARD Ching

2 hours ago

The bonus for missing all possible targets is pretty good. I doubt if we could afford the bonus if they actually hit some targets.

2 Recommend Reply

John Newbery

3 hours ago



missed all the targets? never mind lads....trebles all round!

can we all have a job where failure still gets a bonus award?

5 Recommend Reply



PJS
@John Newbery

2 hours ago

Put in a bid to privatise any current public service - sorted!

Mine's rioja.....

2 Recommend Reply



Chris Miller

@PJS Except Network Rail isn't privatised. It's just a pretend company, paying it's senior staff private sector salaries, but retaining the public sector ethos of rewarding failure. It might be argued that many private sector companies have also played this game, but ultimately that's the fault of their shareholders. The only 'shareholder' of Network Rail is the government.

1 hour ago

2 Recommend Reply

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