



JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

8 April 2014

Joint Approach for reintroduction of DL locomotives

The first of KiwiRail's DL locomotives returned to service today, with more to be re-introduced over the coming weeks.

The reintroduction follows confirmation by WorkSafe New Zealand that the robust set of operating and management procedures developed by KiwiRail and the Rail and Maritime Transport Union, took all practicable steps to managing the work-related hazards.

KiwiRail Chief executive Peter Reidy says the business was pleased to have reached this position.

"This means we can begin re-introducing selected DL locomotives with every confidence that we have taken all possible steps to manage any risk to our people. And that in turn means we can begin restoring the service levels that our customers rely on us for.

The 40 DL locomotives were withdrawn from service on February 28th after confirmed asbestos containing materials were used.

"We made it clear from the start that no DL locomotive would re-enter service until we are completely satisfied the appropriate measures are in place to ensure our people are safe," Mr Reidy says.

"That has meant operating with a reduced train plan for the past month, which has impacted on businesses and supply chains around the country. We can now begin returning to full capacity and service levels."

The first priority will be to stabilise the existing reduced train plan, before reintroducing suspended services and increasing capacity on route where this had been reduced, he said.

Rail services to Northland are expected to resume on April 14th.

Rail and Maritime Transport Union General Secretary Wayne Butson said that a cautious approach was absolutely the right one.

“It is good that there have been no positive cab test results so far. But our members know that where there is asbestos present in locomotives, risk still remains, and so a very careful process for eliminating the risk to rail staff was needed,” he said.

“Our members told us emphatically that the locomotives needed to be laid up until we were satisfied that the risk had been properly addressed.”

“But they also told us that they were worried about the company’s freight customers, and their work mates’ job security, in particular in areas such as Northland which has had freight temporarily suspended.”

“On this basis we have worked with KiwiRail to put as robust a process as possible in place for the testing of locomotives before they head to service.”

“I commend our team of union delegates involved in the discussions who were tireless in achieving the least risk and maximum protection for operating and maintenance services.”

The plan will see the newer Generation II locomotives progressively reintroduced to service over the next two to three weeks. This follows the replacement of locomotive car body doors, the cleaning and sanitising of the locomotives and the satisfactory completion of a final set of air and swab sample tests. Remaining asbestos containing materials in the locomotives will be removed within 12 months, and appropriate management procedures and controls will remain in place during his period.

The older Generation I locomotives, will not be returned to service until all known ACM are removed. This rectification will be carried out over the next six months which will enable them to be available for spring peak season demand.

Ends

Issued by KiwiRail and the Rail and Maritime Transport Union. Media contacts:

KiwiRail: Kimberley Brady, Communications Manager, 021942 519

RMTU: Wayne Butson is presently overseas. For further RMTU comment please contact Stuart Johnstone, RMTU Organiser, on (027) 246-4961