Suicide Prevention Dutch Railways
Outline presentation

• Dutch Railways
• History programme
• Facts and figures
• Starting points programme
• Media and communication starting points
• Technical and soft measures
• First results and future
Our Mission

ProRail connects people, cities and businesses by a dense, intensively used rail network.

ProRail provides a secure, reliable, punctual and sustainable rail network and comfortable stations, in conjunction with operators and partners.

Our professionals work efficiently and cost-consciously on a rail network focused on pleasant passenger travel and unobstructed freight transport.
Our Ambition

Safe rail
Zero avoidable accidents

Reliable rail
Zero avoidable disruptions - 30%

Punctual rail
Further increase in punctuality

Sustainable rail
- Less energy consumption
- Highest rung on the CO₂ performance ladder
What we do

Managing stations
Informing operators
Controlling all rail traffic
Maintaining existing rail network
Construction laying new track, building new stations
Allocating the space on the track
ProRail

24/7

24 hours per day / 7 days a week / 365 days a year

population 16.7 M

4 M local residents

safety
reliability
punctuality
sustainability

1,000,000 passengers per day

3,300,000 trains per day

115,000 tonnes of freight per day

10 passenger operators passenger transport per day:

138 M km.

17 freight carriers freight transport per day:

10 M km.

source: jaarverslag ProRail 2011
Infrastructure

- 11,599 signals
- 7,000 km of track
- 397 stations
- 58 bridges
- 15 tunnels
- 7,352 switches
- 2,759 railroad crossings
- Network length: 3,035 km

Source: jaarverslag ProRail 2011
Our Professionals

4,306 employees
29% female employees
19% parttime

1 head office
4 regional offices
13 traffic control centers and various project offices

source: jaarverslag ProRail 2011
Our customers

source: jaarverslag ProRail 2011
Facts and figures suicides

- On average 200 suicides a year
- Major impact on railway personnel (at least 3 days l.t.i.)
- On average 2.5 hours breakdown time (availability of the railway)
- 58% access at level crossings, 22% off platforms, 18% incidents along the tracks, 2% other locations
- 60% of the suicidal people are/were treated at a mental health institution (nearby).
- Most victims commit suicide in a delusional phase
- Sensational appeal in the media. Unwanted high risk of copy cat behaviour.
Suicides: a focussed approach

Prevention Railway Suicide programme (2010-2015)
Assigned by the ministry of Transportation: There is insight in railway suicide for the purpose of developing and implementing effective measures to reduce incidents.

Goals:
1. Prevention of railway suicide
2. Reduction of railway breakdown time

Emphasis on 4 key projects:
1. Registration & effect analysis (analysis of effectiveness of preventive measures & improving registration)
2. Measures & pilots (determining ‘hard’ & ‘soft’ measures)
3. (Scientific) Research & Development and Communication
4. Improving incident management & decreasing breakdown time
Programme Suicide Prevention

Major social issue
Problem for railways
Major impact on people involved
Impact on availability of tracks
2,5 hours breakdown time
100,000 euros direct costs per incident
Complex communication

Insight into complex problem
Technical and soft measures
Cooperation stakeholders
Thorough analysis, research and experience
Media guidelines and cooperation
Focus Programme

• The national number of suicide in The Netherlands increases, on the railway it seems to stay the same (high and low exceptions)

• We are able to reduce the number of incidents on specific locations (40% reduction), but this also leads to a shift to other locations

• Which is why we are now trying to implement measures in a joining area

• We keep analysing how incidents and trends develop and what side effects occur then finetune our measures

• Communication is an important risk factor, should be dealt with precision and focus
Complex communication
Risk of copy cat behaviour

• Emphasise complexity of suicide and focus on the correct context

• Use neutral words, no sensation or romantising

• Prevent ‘framing’: no fixed combination of railway and suicide.

• No overrepresentation of the train as a means for suicide.

• No specific locations: they could become suicide spots.

• No specific details on the execution of the suicide. We don’t want to give people a manual.

• Emphasise the prospect of help. This can have a positive effect.
Prevention measures railway suicide

June 2013 Paris RESTRAIL
First results (2010-2012) (1)

- International conference in 2011 at promotion of dr Cornelis van Houwelingen on Railway suicide.
- Good and accessible system for data registration and effect analysis
- Technical measures in 2011 at 14 high risk locations throughout the country
- Setting up stakeholder management
First results (2010-2012) (2)

- Start of international collaboration in international programma FP7: Restrail.
- Official collaboration with 113Online
- Effective pilot with signs near the tracks leading to anonymous psychic help
- Pilot checklist for speeding up the diagnosis after an incident.
- Collaboration with NS on prevention activities
- Media guideline for journalists and developing one media message for the railway sector
What’s happening now? (2013) (1)

• Technical (and soft) measures in place based on an “area approach” in the southern part of the Netherlands (Eindhoven)
• Measures at 12 extra risk locations
• Pilot sessions course railway personnel ‘Contact with (possible) suicidal persons’
• Feasibility study ‘Blue light’ on high risk stations and level crossings
What’s happening now? (2013) (2)

- Continuous monitoring effect measures area approach and new area research
- Pilot cameras on trains for decreasing breakdown time and analysis possibilities (NS/Arriva)
- Continuing collaboration 113Online, mutual actions towards mental health institutions near the railways, putting up signs at more locations
- Further contribution to international EU programme RESTRAIL
- Implementing media strategy, providing a railway case for second-year Journalism students.

- Continuous analysis existing and new measures
- Choosing which measures can be taken on the basis of area approach, risk locations or innovations
- Implementing training railway personnel for contact with (possible) suicidal people
- Possibly implementing ‘Blue Light’ op risk locations and level crossings
- Implementing interview study among survivors of a suicide attempt
- Continuing collaboration with 113Online
- EU-programme RESTRAIL, conclusions and dissiminating results
- Media strategy
- Measures with regard to improving breakdown time after an incident
Questions or information:

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