

2 Generic Congestion Control Plan

2.1 Introduction

Circumstances can arise where it becomes necessary to control the numbers of customers on a station. The objective of congestion control is to prevent crowding conditions escalating within the station which put the safety of customers and staff at risk.

All station staff must know how to deal with congestion when it occurs. This plan provides a generic guideline for all stations across the network for dealing with congestion.

Also see Station Specific Congestion Control & Emergency Plan and Rule Book No 11 Station Management, section 7.

2.2 Principles

Anticipation

The most important thing is to prevent serious congestion by anticipation, identification and action before it occurs. Steps should be taken at once to limit the effects of congestion and in most situations prevent it escalating.

Definition

Congestion can be described as: **'When a person cannot move reasonably freely between point A and point B, e.g. from one end of a platform to the other...'**

Observation

Staff must be observant to the needs of vulnerable persons who may be at higher risk in congested areas.

2.3 Causes of congestion

Congestion can be caused by:-

- Very heavy customer traffic
- Breakdown in the train service
- Limited and disrupted train services
- Limited access to parts of the station
- Loss of lifts and/or escalators
- Special events
- Other station closures
- Luggage
- Tourists/persons unfamiliar with the station
- Positioning of signage – e.g. directly at the bottom of stairs
- Poor organisation of pedestrian traffic routes – customers crossing over each other
- Non-existent/poor segregation of direction of customer traffic
- Inherent problems with station – i.e. design, sheer volume of traffic
- Bottlenecks
- Vending outlets - i.e. Newspaper sellers etc.
- Whiteboards/Metro newspaper bins

- Siting of machinery and other equipment – i.e. cash-points
- Buskers/beggars causing an obstruction
- Weather.

2.4 Indicators of congestion

Stations can very quickly become congested and problems may rapidly spread. Poorly managed congestion can lead to serious incidents. Ideally, congestion should be “nipped in the bud” before risks to customers and staff are realised. Below are some early signs and indicators of congestion:

- Customers/staff not being able to pass each other with ease
- Customers/staff not being able to get off escalators/lifts freely due to a build up of people.
- Full platforms
- Customers blocking back on escalators/stairwells
- Queues for ticket issuing facilities
- Customers blocking back whilst trying to enter/exit gate lines
- Customers getting too close to the edge of the platform

When station staff notice indicators of congestion, steps should be taken to attempt to counteract it.

2.5 Limiting and managing congestion

In all cases of congestion there must be three priorities:

- Stop customers coming into the affected area
- Disperse (if possible) the customers in the affected area
- Disseminate information to all customers and staff

All staff must be aware of the areas within the station where congestion can quickly build up, so that the Customer Service Supervisor can be informed and take the necessary actions.