



*Challenges and Opportunities for Rail Safety*



# International Railway Safety Council (IRSC)

**Charter**

Approved on 23 September, 2006 in Dublin.  
Updated 24 April 2014 (new Logo; name change to Council)

## **ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL RAIL SAFETY COUNCIL (IRSC)**

### **IRSC CHARTER**

This document may be cited as the IRSC Charter. The Charter sets out the basic framework within which the IRSC operates.

### **BACKGROUND**

The IRSC is a forum that brings together rail safety professionals from around the globe in order to exchange information and provide experiences and lessons for improving rail safety and is exclusively devoted to rail safety issues. The IRSC meets annually, generally in October or November.

The first IRSC was held in 1990, as a result of a joint Japan Rail East (JRE) and Japan Railway Union (JREU) management initiative. They had been discussing safety issues related to their company and decided to look for new perspectives on safety from overseas experts. The meeting was a great success and has developed since then into an annual international meeting. The diverse mix of rail safety experts who attend results in many thought provoking and challenging ideas, as well as an in-depth understanding of a range of problems, which are useful reference tools for any of the participants.

The IRSC now makes a significant contribution to the ongoing improvement of rail safety management and performance around the world.

### **PURPOSE OF THE IRSC**

The purpose of the IRSC is to improve railway safety by providing delegates with a forum to facilitate the exchange of information on new developments, experiences and safety lessons. The IRSC helps delegates improve their knowledge and ability in undertaking their roles of managing and improving railway safety.

The IRSC also enables delegates who regularly attend the IRSC the opportunity to develop strong personal working relationships with each other. These personal networks further enhance continual safety improvement through an ongoing exchange of safety information and advice.

To promote continual learning on a global basis, and for balance, the IRSC is normally hosted in a different country each year. This is done to:

- help promote rail safety learning in the host country;
- enable international delegates to experience, first hand, rail safety developments and practices in the host country; and
- present opportunities for rail safety officers from each host country to be exposed to an international perspective on rail safety issues.

IRSC is a “not-for-profit”, non-commercial meeting and as a result is essentially self-funding. Costs for participants are entirely the responsibility of the individual delegates or their employing organisation.

The IRSC takes a “Chatham House Rule” approach to the sessions. Meetings, events and discussions are normally conducted “on the record” with the Rule occasionally invoked at the speaker's request. In cases where the Rule is not considered sufficiently strict, an event may be held “off the record”. This means that, when a meeting or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity, nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed. The Chatham House Rule originated at Chatham House (in the United Kingdom) with the aim of providing anonymity to speakers and to encourage openness and the sharing of information. It is now used throughout the world as an aid to free discussion.

The IRSC does not accept members of the Press in the main meeting room during session. At the discretion of the host the IRSC may accept attendance of the Press during the opening session.

## **SCOPE**

The IRSC encourages attendance and participation from all countries in the world which have railway systems. The meetings take place around the globe, with efforts to maintain a balance between all areas.

## **IRSC DELEGATES**

Delegates to the annual IRSC are normally senior railway safety practitioners and specialists. They are invited from railway organisations, from government railway safety regulator and railway accident investigation agencies and from railway unions and associations representing railway organisations. Delegates from up to 30 countries regularly attend the IRSC.

As a working meeting, all delegates are encouraged to contribute by offering to present papers and making presentations, to chair one of the meeting sessions and engaging in debate on safety issues.

## **HOSTING THE IRSC**

IRSC shall be organised on an annual basis. A host for each year shall be established with, wherever possible, a pattern of selection based on planning two years ahead.

At the closing session of each IRSC the task of hosting the next IRSC is handed to another IRSC delegate representing their railway safety related organisation from a particular country or a region.

The host organisation will often work in partnership with other railway safety related organisations in its country or region to coordinate the planning and running of the

next ISRC. The host and partners are required to ensure their IRSC meeting supports, and focuses on, safety improvement.

The host organisation usually forms a Steering Committee involving other railway organisations in the country or region and may engage a conference manager to assist with organising day-to-day arrangements.

The host is required to organise the IRSC in a manner consistent with guidelines provided by the IRSC Core Group. The IRSC is not hosted by a commercial conference manager and is run on a not-for-profit basis.

As a not-for-profit event the IRSC is generally also a non-commercial event. The IRSC is focused on safety practitioners helping safety practitioners. The focus within any IRSC meeting at all times is on improving railway safety. It is not a forum to promote political views or for consultants, suppliers and contractors to promote particular expertise, products or business opportunities. Any commercial involvement is usually kept low key and any such promotions are held outside the main meeting room.

The IRSC offers an open forum for discussion of safety matters, with no particular axe to grind. Its purpose is to have a candid, open-minded, debate and exchange of information and to discuss ideas for advancing rail safety without political or commercial influence. To facilitate discussion, the size is, ideally, limited to 130 registered delegates. However, the host country, if it wishes, may permit attendance by many more observers. This will for example, by introducing more local or regional participants to the IRSC, help increase overall awareness of safety issues and contribute to a positive safety culture.

Presentations to be included in the IRSC program will be selected on the basis of their safety content.

## **SPONSORSHIP**

To be sustainable and keep delegate registration costs down an IRSC host may seek financial support. While the IRSC is not a commercial conference sponsorship as such is acceptable and sponsors may be identified in material promoting the IRSC. While sponsors may promote their business by display in areas outside the main meeting IRSC meeting room they may not use presentations during main sessions for that purpose.

## **IRSC APPROACH**

IRSC has no binding decision-making authority. The responsibility for safety rests with the individual rail companies, IRSC can nevertheless provide a forum in which a wide number of issues can be identified and common positions developed that will help the decision making process.

Attendees may, of course, on a voluntary basis, either alone or in liaison with colleagues, take ideas discussed at IRSC and initiate corresponding activities.

IRSC enables attendees to:

- improve exchanges and promote mutual understanding;
- seek convergence on key approaches to improve safety;
- help secure high-level acceptance for these approaches; and
- be better informed and able to take positions on matters raised during the IRSC meetings.

Safety themes for IRSC shall be selected by the host organisation but will be based on consultation with IRSC Core Group, past hosts and its own Steering Committee.

IRSC usually invites senior safety practitioners; however, delegates may come from all levels within organisations. These organisations predominantly include rail operating companies, infrastructure owners, railway industry associations, trade unions, accident investigation agencies and railway safety regulatory authorities.

IRSC is also able to support the global rail community by acting in an advisory capacity in the field of safety.

## **IRSC CORE GROUP**

The Core Group is a group of recognised key people / organisations that regularly attend and support the IRSC work and who work together as a high-level policy group to plan the future direction of the IRSC.

The **Purpose of the Core Group** is to work to preserve the integrity of the IRSC concept and to ensure the IRSC is an ongoing success.

To this end the roles of the Core Group and its members are to:

1. Plan ahead for the continuing evolution of the IRSC;
2. Identify and negotiate with potential host organisations, based on a set of criteria including:
  - Whether an organisation is a regular contributor/supporter;
  - The extent to which the organisation or country may benefit from international rail community support;
  - Whether there are important safety developments (technical and/or managerial) to showcase and which international delegates would benefit from seeing;
  - Are they planning changes to their management of safety or operations and wish to present and discuss them; and
  - Publication/promotion of IRSC as a concept and support for the hosting organisation for a specific event.
3. Maintain an up to date database of past and potential delegates to facilitate invitation lists for future IRSCs. Core Group members assist to keep the address list for their country or region current;
4. Maintain Guidelines to assist forthcoming hosts on running an IRSC;
5. Make proposals to the Core Group on matters of principle e.g. the layout and principal content of the IRSC website and seek acceptance by the delegates;

6. Act as the focal point for any particular projects that IRSC meetings might mandate;
7. Support the forthcoming host organisation in preparing and facilitating the proposed proceedings;
8. Identify key railway safety issues around the world and submit them for a future agenda/theme;
9. Assist in encouraging people/countries/organisations to join the IRSC “family” and to actively participate in IRSC meetings; and
10. Determine Core Group membership; and
11. Monitor, review and maintain the Charter.

The Core Group meets formally at each IRSC. At other times it will liaise by email/phone as required.

The Core Group is structured to provide a balance between railway organisations (infrastructure managers and train operators), rail safety regulators, rail accident investigation agencies, national railway associations and railway trade unions.

Equally there is an endeavour to achieve membership such that all areas of the world are represented.

General rules for membership of the Core Group are:

1. Any previous IRSC host organisation may be a member;
2. A railway organisation or a railway safety related organisation that has been represented at five or more IRSCs, including three of the past five years, may submit a request for membership to Core Group;
3. Other than by specific approval of Core Group there should be no more than two organisations representing any country, with the exception of Japan, the founding member;
4. Despite the above, the Core Group may invite any other organisation to be a member if, in its opinion, the organisation has the ability through ongoing participation in the Core Group, to significantly support the purpose and future objectives of the IRSC; and
5. Core Group member organisations must advise the Core Group who will be its key contact representative. The key contact representative for the Core Group can change at any time depending on the wishes of the Core Group member organisation.

“Railway safety related organisation” means a railway safety regulation or accident investigation agency, a national or international association representing railways, and railway unions.

The Core Group in any year is led by the immediately past host.

A list of Core Group member organisations will be maintained on the IRSC website.

## **IRSC WEBSITE**

One of the most effective methods of communicating to the world at large is through a website. The IRSC website can be found at <http://www.intlrailsafety.com/>.

The website is used to:

- Promote the IRSC;
- Publicise future IRSCs; and
- Post the presentations made at past IRSCs to promote global improvement in railway safety.

This is the only method by which IRSC will communicate with the world media. Because of the Chatham House Rule and philosophy, no invitations are extended to media organisations to attend the IRSC meeting.

All requests for information to be added to the website should be channelled through this facility.

The website also has public versions of most of the papers that have been presented to IRSC over a number of years.

Host organisations may publicise their next IRSC on their own organisation's website, or create their own special website for a particular IRSC meeting with a link to the IRSC website. Conversely the IRSC website will also provide a link to the host organisation website promoting a particular IRSC.

Conclusions and copies of all the papers presented to IRSC will be posted on the website. This cannot, however, be done without the permission of the author. The website has posted versions of most of the papers that have been presented since 2002.

## **IRSC LOGO**

The IRSC logo is displayed on its website pages and is applied to key documents for each IRSC.

The triangle is a key element of the IRSC logo design and is symbolic of the three key elements of 'Operator', 'Equipment' and 'Rules' working together in the safety management system at SNCF. The triangle now also represents people from all sectors working together at the IRSC.

## **GUIDELINES FOR IRSC HOSTS**

A document: Guidelines for IRSC Hosts has been developed and will be maintained by the Core Group. These guidelines are to be provided to potential host organisations to provide practical advice in planning and organising future IRSC meetings.