

My Role and Experience as a Safety Representative in the Bogie Shop at Irish Rail

A Little About Me

I am Alan Jordan. I work at Irish Rail and act as a Safety Representative in the Bogie Shop.



Before joining Irish Rail, I had already spent almost 30 years working as a fitter, most of those years in Dublin Port. My background there was heavily safety-oriented, as I worked in environments that involved petrol, aviation fuel, and LPG. In those industries, safety isn't just a rule - it's a way of life. You quickly learn that one small mistake can have catastrophic consequences, not just for yourself but for everyone around you. The strict procedures, constant monitoring, and safety-first culture in the port instilled in me a deep respect for doing things the right way every single time. It's an attitude that has stayed with me throughout my entire career.

My Work at Iarnród Éireann Irish Rail

When I joined Irish Rail, I realised that while safety was still paramount, the types of risks and safety challenges were different. I had to learn a new system, new hazards, and new methods of work. Coming from the high-risk world of fuels and chemicals, it was interesting to see how safety in the rail industry had its own unique focus areas—such as mechanical lifting, electrical systems, heavy machinery, and confined space work.

One of the moments that really made me appreciate the level of responsibility involved was when I first saw a locomotive being lifted with a crane. Watching the process from start to finish, I was struck by the level of planning, coordination, and communication that went into it. It wasn't just a lift - it was a complex safety operation that required everyone involved to understand their role and follow strict procedures.

“ Safety is truly a team effort. ”

Becoming a Safety Representative

Becoming a Safety Representative in the Bogie Shop at Irish Rail was never something I had planned for in my career, but it has turned out to be one of the most rewarding roles I've ever taken on. I was elected to the position through a vote by my colleagues, which meant a lot to me because it showed their trust and confidence in my ability to represent them and look after their health, safety, and wellbeing in the workplace. I've always believed that safety is everyone's responsibility, but being chosen by my peers gave me a deeper sense of pride and duty to make a difference.

What I do as a Safety Representative at Irish Rail

As a Safety Representative, my day-to-day work involves a range of responsibilities that all aim to keep people safe and ensure the workshop runs smoothly. One of my main duties is giving safety introductions to new staff and contractors. I take this part of the job seriously because first impressions matter. I want everyone who joins our workshop to understand not only the safety rules but also the culture we promote - one where we look out for each other and take pride in working safely. These introductions set the tone for new workers and help them feel comfortable asking questions and raising concerns.

I also take part in regular safety tours around the workshop. These tours give us a chance to see what's happening on the floor, talk with staff, and identify any potential hazards or areas for improvement. It's a proactive way of keeping on top of safety before problems arise. During these tours, I find that having good relationships with my colleagues helps a lot—people are more open to discussing issues when they know you're there to help, not to criticise.

Once a month, I sit in on our Safety Review Workshops (SRWs), where we discuss ongoing issues, share updates, and review incidents or near misses. These meetings are an important link between management and the workforce.

I'm also part of the team that reviews our risk assessments in the bogie workshop. This is a key part of what we do because it ensures that all the tasks carried out during the overhaul of bogies are done safely and efficiently. We regularly update and write Safe Systems of Work (SSoW) to reflect changes in equipment, procedures, or working conditions. It's a detailed process that requires both practical experience and an eye for detail. Having spent so many years on the tools myself, I know how important it is that these documents make sense to the people actually doing the job. Safety paperwork isn't just about compliance—it's about making sure the information genuinely helps workers perform their tasks safely.

What Makes the Safety Representative Role Work

Having a good manager who listens is also a main factor in having a safe workplace. I owe a lot of my learning to our manager. He put me to work straight away, throwing me in the deep end by giving safety briefings to my peers (after practicing my briefing technique to him), and that's where it all started for me. His guidance and encouragement helped me build confidence in speaking about safety and taking a proactive role in improving it within the workshop. Having leadership that values safety and trusts their team to take responsibility makes all the difference in how safety is managed day to day.

Why I Like Being a Safety Representative

One of the aspects of being a Safety Representative that I enjoy most is teamwork and it's nice to look at the benefit and speak to shared purposes. There's a real sense of achievement when you help solve a safety issue or see an improvement that makes people's jobs safer or easier. Sometimes it's small things - like improving lighting or adjusting work practices—and other times it's larger projects that take months of collaboration. No matter the size, every improvement counts.

Proud Moments as A Safety Representative

I've had a few proud moments in my career, but two stand out in particular. The first was being named **Safety Representative of the Year in the CME in 2023**. That recognition meant a lot because it wasn't just about me—it was the collective effort of everyone in the Bogie Shop who works hard every day to make our workplace safer. It showed that the work we do as Safety Representatives really does make a difference.



The second proud moment came when I was asked to represent Irish Rail and give a presentation at the HSA Safety Representative Conference 2024 in Dublin Castle. To be honest, that was well outside my comfort zone. I'm much more at home on the workshop floor than standing behind a podium in front of a large audience. But it turned out to be an incredible experience. It gave me the chance to share the good work being done at Irish Rail and to learn from other safety representatives across different industries. I owe a lot of thanks to our Safety Manager in Inchicore Works, for his support and encouragement, and the HSA, who organised the conference and made it such a valuable event for everyone involved.

My Key Takeaway for Other Safety Representatives

I've always seen myself as a bridge between the two sides—a person who can listen to workers' concerns and bring them forward in a constructive way, while also helping management communicate their plans and expectations. It's about balance and understanding. Sometimes I think of myself as the cushion between the two, softening the edges when discussions get tough and helping both sides see things from each other's perspective.

Looking back, I never would have imagined that my career as a fitter would lead me to where I am now. Safety wasn't something I set out to work in. But, it has become a big part of who I am. Being a Safety Representative has given me a new perspective on the workplace and a deeper appreciation for the importance of communication, teamwork, and continuous learning. It's not always easy- sometimes it can be challenging to balance the needs of workers and management - but it's always worthwhile when you see positive changes happening because of something you were part of.

At the end of the day, safety is about people. It's about making sure everyone goes home safely and well after a day's work. That's what drives me every day in the Bogie Shop. Whether I'm reviewing a risk assessment, welcoming new staff, or taking part in a safety tour, I'm proud to play my part in keeping Irish Rail a safe place to work.