

City Talk



TRAINING MUST KICK IN AS THINGS GO OFF RAILS

The recent MTR train incident at Yau Ma Tei station has caused public concern. I shall refrain from making guesses over its cause as it is already in the good

hands of international and local experts.

I would just like to focus on the process of evacuating passengers from a train in the event of an incident.

Readers may remember that, in past articles, I have said that the quickest and safest way to evacuate passengers from a train that has stopped is through the station and not by walking along the tracks.

Stations are designed to allow large numbers of passengers to leave within short time spans and in safe conditions.

They have well-lit platforms, many escalators and staircases, and effective fire protection systems. Their exit paths may also be familiar to passengers.

Only in exceptional circumstances should people be directed to leave a train and walk on the track to the next station.

In a tunnel evacuation, a train driver must advise the control room to ensure, first and foremost, traction power has been switched off, and lighting turned on.

The tunnel ventilation system must be checked to ensure it is in an operational mode that is compatible with people walking in that section.

Should there be adjacent or connecting tracks, train operations on them must all be stopped to minimize the risks to passengers who are walking on the track but with no knowledge of a tunnel's layout and other details.

Similar precautionary procedures apply to evacuation in above-ground sections, only there is, of course, no need to worry about ventilation, and lighting may be unnecessary unless during the night.

Before passengers are allowed onto the track, railway personnel must be present to direct and control their detraining in an orderly fashion and to guide them to the next station in total safety, taking care of all, especially those who may be handicapped or getting on in age.



Nuts and bolts

Edmund Leung

I know there are emergency doors at both ends of the MTR trains, but they are, as the word makes plain, for emergencies only, and should only be used in exceptional circumstances, and under the close control of railway staff.

The temptation to indiscriminately open these doors must be resisted.

Without guidance from experienced rail personnel, any attempt to get on the track may result in more risks than safety.

Different railway systems also use different detraining procedures.

As an example, for West Rail trains, detraining is from the side doors, and there is an elevated walkway along the track that can allow easy access for evacuating passengers to get on walkways without any need to walk on the track.

However, for East Rail, steps or stools are required to facilitate passenger detraining from side doors onto the track.

We simply cannot rely on untrained passengers to know the intricacies of the different systems for safe exits during emergencies.

Train drivers and associated personnel are trained to direct passengers under emergency conditions.

They will endeavor to discharge passengers in stations, and only in exceptional circumstances, would they direct them to leave a train onto the tracks.

Passengers must observe safety rules and not use these exits unless directed by train drivers. A failure to observe these procedures will only increase the risks to their own personal safety.

Transport systems are designed for safe use by the public. Passengers must not risk their own life and safety by using emergency exits without careful thoughts.

Veteran engineer Edmund Leung Kwong-ho casts an expert eye over features of modern life