

Leaves on the Line Quiz

When you've been on the train before, have you noticed that there are lots of trees close to train tracks? There are a lot of trees alongside Scotland's railway lines! Leaves look really nice in autumn when the leaves turn different shades of red, brown and orange. But leaves can be really bad for railway lines and trains.

When the leaves fall off the trees they can land on the rails which can be dangerous for trains. A tree can lose up to 200,000 leaves so lots of leaves can land on the tracks. When the leaves hit the rails, the heat and weight of the trains help the leaves to break down and turn into a sludgy, slippery, mushy mess called mulch. Mulch is really difficult for train wheels to grip on to.

Keeping the railway free of leaves

Between September and December, teams work hard to keep all train wheels and rails clear of leaves. Leaf-fall teams are positioned across Scotland so they can react quickly when a driver reports leaves on the line. They clean the rails quickly so that trains can run safely and they don't get delayed. There are special trains called 'rail-head treatment trains' that clear the rails with jet washers and then coat them with a special sandy gel that helps trains to keep their grip.

Why do leaves cause delays?

When it's known that there are leaves on the line, drivers have to drive really slowly and extra carefully. They have to slow down and brake a lot earlier for signals and stations. Then when they're ready to go again, they have to accelerate more gently. All of this takes more time.

Questions

1. What is it called when the leaves break down and turn into a sludgy mess?

A: _____

2. What two things help the leaves break down?

A: _____

3. During which season do the leaves fall off the trees?

A: _____

4. How many leaves can fall off a tree?

A: _____

5. What is the name of the special train that clears the rails with jet washers?

A: _____

6. What do the special trains coat the rails with?

A: _____

7. What do drivers have to do when they know there are leaves on the line?

A: _____

8. What do drivers have to brake early for if there are leaves on the line?

A: _____