



MINISTRY OF
CONSTRUCTION AND TRANSPORT
TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BUREAU

FINAL REPORT (EXTRACTION)



2024-1172-5
(HU-10627)

Railway incident / SPAD
Pocsaj-Esztár, 23rd October 2024

Translation

This document is the translation of Points 1, 5 and 6 of Hungarian version of the Final Report. Although efforts have been made to translate the mentioned parts of the Final Report as accurately as possible, discrepancies may occur. In this case, the Hungarian Final Report is the authentic, official version.

Basic principles of the safety investigation

The purpose of the safety investigation fulfilled by Transportation Safety Bureau (TSB) as National Investigation Body of Hungary is to reveal the causes and circumstances of serious railway accidents, railway accidents and railway incidents and propose recommendations in order to prevent similar incidents. The safety investigation is not intended to examine and determine fault, blame or liability in any form.

The findings of the safety investigation are based on an assessment of the evidence available and obtained by TSB in the course of the investigation, taking into account the principles of a fair and impartial procedure. In the Final Report, the persons involved in the occurrence shall be referred to by the positions and duties they had at the time of the occurrence.

The Final Report shall not have binding force and no appeal proceedings may be initiated against it.

This safety investigation has been carried out by TSB pursuant to relevant provisions of

- Act CLXXXIV of 2005 on the safety investigation of aviation, railway and marine accidents and incidents;
- Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/572 of 24 April 2020 on the reporting structure to be followed for railway accident and incident investigation reports;
- in the absence of other related regulation of the Act CLXXXIV of 2005, the TSB conducts the investigation in accordance with Act CL of 2016 on General Public Administration Procedures.

Act CLXXXIV of 2005 is to serve compliance with Directive (EU) 2016/798 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on railway safety.

The competence of the TSB is based on Government Regulation № 230/2016. (VII.29.) on the assignment of a transportation safety body and on the dissolution of Transportation Safety Bureau with legal succession.

The safety investigation is independent of other investigations, administrative infringement or criminal proceedings, as well as proceedings initiated by employers in connection with the accident or incident.

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1. SUMMARY

At 18:17 on 23 October 2024, train no. 36723, which had stopped at Pocsaj-Esztár station, departed without authorisation and burst switch no. 2 open, which was in incorrect position for this train, and stopped on the switch. Train No. 36746, arriving from the opposite direction, stopped in front of the entrance signal, which had been reset to danger position by the traffic controller. The railway track was closed for 5 hours, during which time 7 passenger trains were cancelled.

The cause of the incident was that the driver of train No. 36723 did not recognise that traffic personnel were on duty at the station at the time of the incident and, without the authorisation of the traffic controller, started the train when the chief ticket inspector gave the “Ready to depart” signal.

The IC identified as a system-level factor that different traffic technologies must be applied at Pocsaj-Esztár station at different times of the day, depending on whether or not traffic control personnel are on duty at the station.

The TSB does not consider it necessary to issue a safety recommendation, as such cases can be avoided by complying with the rules and paying the attention expected of the staff.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Summary

5.1.1 Direct causes

Acts, mistakes, events or conditions or a combination thereof the elimination or avoiding of which could probably have prevented the accident or incident:

- a) The locomotive driver of train no. 36723 started the train without the authorisation of the traffic controller, based on the signal given by the chief ticket inspector indicating that the train was ready to depart;
- b) The locomotive driver did not recognise that there were traffic personnel at the station at that time and that he had to drive his train accordingly.

5.1.2 Indirect causes

During the investigation, the IC identified no acts, errors, events or conditions which influenced the occurrence by increasing its probability, accelerating the effects or the severity of the consequences, but the elimination of which would not have prevented the occurrence.

5.1.3 Systemic factors

Causal or contributing factors of organisational, management, social or regulatory nature which are likely to have an effect on similar or related occurrences, particularly including regulatory framework conditions, the design and use of the safety management systems, the skills of the personnel, the procedures and maintenance:

- a) A different traffic technology must be used during the traffic controller's working hours and during breaks of that service.

5.2 Actions taken

The railway company did not take any safety improvement measures in connection with the incident after it occurred.

5.3 Additional notes

Risk increasing factors that are unrelated to the occurrence of the incident:

- a) The route book was not updated to reflect the changes made during the reconstruction and modifications.

5.4 Proven procedures, good practices

It helped to reduce the consequences of the occurrence and avoid a more serious outcome that

- a) Upon noticing the emergency situation, the traffic controller set the entry signal in front of train No. 36746 to the danger position and instructed the driver of train No. 36723 by telephone to stop the train.
- b) The driver of train No. 36723 noticed that the points were in the wrong position and initiated emergency braking.

5.5 Lessons learnt

The basis for avoiding such incidents is primarily the attention expected of the crew and the existence of appropriate situational awareness. The latter was supported – unsuccessfully in this case – by the choice of the receiving track, but it could also be supported by a more permanent traffic technology.

6. SAFETY RECOMMENDATION

Such cases can be avoided by complying with the rules and the attention expected of the staff, therefore the IC does not consider it justified to issue a safety recommendation.