

SUMMARY

LEVEL CROSSING ACCIDENT IN KYRÖ, FINLAND, ON 23 JUNE 2010

On Wednesday 23 June 2010 at 3.44pm, an accident involving a freight train and a timber-carrying articulated vehicle occurred at a half-barrier equipped level crossing in the Kyrö area of Pöytyä municipality. The timber-carrying articulated vehicle started to manoeuvre past the half barriers, which were in the lowered position, when the freight train, which had departed from Kyrö railway yard in the direction of Tampere, collided with articulated vehicle's trailer.

There were no serious personal injuries. Both locomotives of the train were derailed and the front and chassis of the frontmost locomotive was damaged. The articulated vehicle's trailer was damaged beyond repair. The barrier installations of the level crossing were also severely damaged. The repair costs arising from the damage to track equipment and the level crossing amounted to EUR 150,000.

The accident occurred because the articulated vehicle started to manoeuvre past the lowered half barriers, as a result of which the train collided with the vehicle's trailer.

The decision by the vehicle driver to start manoeuvring past the barriers was apparently influenced by the pressure resulting from being in a queue. The driver felt pressure building because the long wait in the queue put extra burden on schedules and also because the driver felt that the articulated vehicle was blocking the pedestrian crossing and partly also access to a nearby store. The decision to proceed was probably also made in part because other drivers were manoeuvring past the barriers, which gave confirmation to the notion that the barrier installations were not functioning properly.

The queues grew to a significant size while the barriers were lowered for too long because the engine driver did not give due regard to the signal and therefore did not notice that the remote controller had given permission to depart. Lack of formal communication between the remote controller and the engine driver led to a misunderstanding and the train did not depart as soon as permission was given. Once the alarm had been issued that the barriers had been lowered too long time, the remote controller failed to contact the engine driver or take any other action to ease the queue at the level crossing before the departure of the train.

Several studies and plans have been initiated from 1996 onwards with regard to improve safety at the Kyrö level crossing. These plans have focused on building an underpass at the Kyrö level crossing or equipping it with double barriers. The investigation commission is not issuing new recommendations but rather notes that an underpass should be built as soon as possible in order to solve the traffic problems now encountered at the crossing.