

SUMMARY

ENDING UP ON THE WRONG TRACK OF A PASSENGER TRAIN IN KORJA, FINLAND, ON 1 OCTOBER 2009

At 12:29pm on Thursday, 1 October 2009, an incident occurred at the Korja station on the Lahti–Kouvola section of line, when a passenger train ended up on the wrong track in front of a freight train.

Several sub-projects relating to the Lahti–Luumäki–Vainikkala construction project were underway on the Lahti–Kouvola section of line. With regard to the Korja station, work was in progress relating to the commissioning of a new signal box to be installed on the Lahti–Kouvola section of line. The Automatic Train Protection (ATP) system was not operational at the Korja station and special arrangements were applied at the station. The signal box of Korja station was manned.

A freight train arriving from the direction of Lahti had stopped on the southbound track, to the west of the Korja station. The incident occurred when a passenger train, arriving from the direction of Kouvola along the northbound track and passing through the turnouts near the western end of the Korja station, entered the southbound track in front of the freight train. The engine driver of the passenger train noticed the danger in time and managed to stop the train 200 metres ahead of the locomotive of the freight train.

The immediate cause of this incident was the transverse route set for freight train ahead of the passenger train by the traffic controller. The traffic controller's situation awareness was not up to date, as a result of which his perception of the location of the passenger train was incorrect.

The situation arose due to signal E being inoperative. The signal box was not used to secure all routes.

Another contributing factor lay in a feature of the signal box, which enables the turnouts on the route being set to turn even if one or more of the track sections directly connected to the turnouts is occupied. Furthermore, the signal box in use enabled a "proceed" signal to be displayed for the freight train.

Unambiguous instructions were not issued for centralised traffic control during the construction work at the Korja operating point. Furthermore, the operating model did not utilise the safety features of the signal box to the full.

To prevent similar situations from occurring, the investigation commission recommends that safety planning should be enhanced during transitional stages.

Two organisational changes occurred while the investigation was in progress: the Finnish Rail Agency became part of the Transport Safety Agency, while the Finnish Rail Administration was incorporated into the Finnish Transport Agency. The previous names are used throughout the investigation report.