

Extract from the investigation report RJ 2009:03 on an incident occurred at level crossing on 11/04/2008

Summary

At 20.05 on 11 April 2008 an incident occurred at a level crossing at Skäggstorp between Stora Höga and Kode between a lorry and its trailer and passenger train 3763.

The lorry and its shipment were on the way from Gothenburg to Skäggstorp to deliver an excavator to a house construction site on a housing estate on the other side of the track, along Road 574. At the level crossing, the lorry driver examined the crossing and increased the ground clearance of the trailer to avoid the risk of getting stuck. Despite this, the lorry combination became immobilised over the track with no possibility of forcing the level crossing gates, and immediately afterwards the sound and light signal was activated and the gates came down.

At the same time, passenger train 3763 was on its way to Gothenburg from Uddevalla. The intersection distant approach signal informed the train driver that the next intersection signal showed "movement allowed 1" and he drove on at a speed of about 110 km/hour. On the straight line section before the level crossing, the driver perceived that something was on the track. He applied the emergency brake and ran towards the rear of the train, which stopped about 50 m in front of the lorry combination.

The signal safety device had functioned in the way intended. The barrier structure was planned in the correct way, and subsequently redesigned to meet the requirements of the various alterations. The reconstruction of the embankment in 1995 may have affected the road profile, and impaired the possibility of driving over the level crossing without getting stuck.

The area has grown over the years, and the interest in setting up permanent living accommodation along with leisure buildings has increased. This has resulted in increased traffic of heavier vehicles with lower clearance than the original design envisaged.

Today, there is no-one who holds overall responsibility and is in charge of coordinating matters which have consequences for the infrastructure around level crossings between the municipality, the Swedish Road Administration and the Swedish Rail Administration.

Causes

The lorry became immobilised on the railway crossing between the gates. This was due to the fact that the lorry's trailer, with its low clearance, got stuck and could not get free.

A contributory cause was that the traindriver obtained "movement allowed" in the intersection signal despite the fact that there was an obstacle on the level crossing.

An underlying reason is the lack of effective cooperation between the responsible authorities regarding the infrastructure around level crossings.

Recommendations

The Swedish Transport Agency is recommended to:

- take steps to ensure that the infrastructure managers move towards an increased use of obstacle detection systems at level crossings (RJ 2009:03 R1);
- along with the infrastructure managers and road maintenance authorities, take steps to ensure that common standards and working methods are developed, and that the cooperation between the municipality and other interested parties is enhanced so that the traffic environment at level crossings is evaluated on an ongoing basis as well as at the actual time of alterations (RJ 2009:03 R2.);
- make arrangements for information on level crossings with special problem features to be made easily available for the planning of various transportations by road (RJ 2009:03 R3).