

Extract from the investigation report RJ 2008:04 on a near-collision occurred on 16/01/2008

Summary

On Wednesday, 16 January 2008 a near-collision occurred on the line section Alby – Ångebyn, in Västernorrland County, involving wagons that were rolling out of control.

At the start of 2008 Green Cargo implemented changes in the planning of freight traffic in Norrland. *Inter alia*, a train was cancelled between Luleå and Ånge. In order to be able to transport wagons which would have travelled as part of the now-cancelled train to Ånge, it was planned that these would be transported with train 9111. From Ånge, the wagons would then be transported in a local freight train (6805) to the wagons' destination station, Alby.

The customer who had ordered transport of his wagons with train 9111 could not guarantee that there would be room for further wagons in the train; instead, Green Cargo hit on the solution of transporting the wagons with train 9113 to Ånge in order to be uncoupled there. This however meant that the wagons could not travel with the local freight train (6805) to Alby which departed earlier in the morning. Consequently, the wagons would arrive at Alby 24 hours later, an arrangement with which Green Cargo's customer was not satisfied.

The personnel at Green Cargo in Ånge then made the suggestion that train 9113 ought to be able to make a pause at Alby for wagon decoupling. Green Cargo made an application to the Swedish Rail Administration for train 9113 to make an extra stop at Alby, which the Swedish Rail Administration also granted.

Train 9113 stopped on track 3 at Alby and decoupled the two end wagons.

Once that was done, the train departed and the shunting foreman contacted the long-distance train dispatcher in Ånge in order to obtain permission to move the wagons from track 3 to the Eka Chemicals track. When the shunting foreman had obtained permission to switch, he released air from the brakes of the wagons and they started rolling in the direction of Ovensjö.

The shunting foreman and the driver drove after the wagons using a shunting engine.

The wagons rolled through Ovensjö to Ångebyn and rolled back to Ovensjö; at Ovensjö they turned and rolled to Ångebyn, where they once again turned back to Ovensjö. Two signal repairers from the Swedish Rail Administration had been called out to the level crossing at Ovensjö. At that spot, they saw the wagons coming rolling from Ångebyn, and dropped the gates at the level crossing at Ovensjö in order to secure the crossing. When the wagons had once again turned at Ovensjö, their speed was so low that the signal repairers were able to walk alongside the wagons and bring them to a halt with the handbrake.

Before this near-accident Green Cargo had failed to carry out any review of the new arrangement for shunting on track 3, and the shunting foreman had no previous experience of decoupling wagons on track 3 at Alby.

The direct cause of the near-accident was that the wagons were not secured against rolling when the braking system was depleted (discharged) of air.

The underlying reason why the wagons were not secured against rolling was that the shunting foreman did not have sufficient familiarity with the location involved. Furthermore, there was no information on the gradient conditions at Alby in the Swedish Rail Administration's safety plan which could be transferred to Green Cargo's own internal instructions.

Causes

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Recommendations

The Swedish Transport Agency is recommended to take steps to ensure that:

- the safety management systems of railway companies are adequate for identifying whether personnel have the correct skills to carry out their work duties

(RJ 2008:04 R1);

- the Swedish Rail Administration, as a matter of urgency, provides information on local conditions that can have an impact on the activities of other operators, e.g. gradient conditions

(RJ 2008:04 R2);

- the Swedish Rail Administration implements those decisions already adopted which are of importance for traffic safety, with particular focus on those decisions which affect other operators *(RJ 2008:04 R3).*