

Extract from the final investigation report on the level crossing accident occurred on 25/09/2009

Summary

At 12.46 pm on Friday, 25 September 2009 SNCF freight train No 56701 running towards Bayonne hit a loaded road tractor and semi-trailer loaded with railway sleepers on level crossing No 77 situated on the line between Bordeaux and Irun, close to the station of Laluque (Landes).

This tractor and semi-trailer was manoeuvring to reach its delivery place situated inside the railway logistics platform, adjacent to the main lines.

No one was hurt in the accident.

The level crossing installations, as well as an overhead line support, were damaged. The front of the locomotive was pushed in, the tractor was badly damaged, the semi-trailer was destroyed and its load scattered.

The principal cause of the accident was the untimely stop of the heavy vehicle during the manoeuvre carried out on the level crossing.

This enquiry led to the formulation of five recommendations concerning

- the awareness of professional drivers to the specific risks of level crossings,
- the systematic preparation of safety procedures between the transporters and the consignees
- and the procedure for operating a railway site served by road.

It has also led to the expression of a remark regarding the choice between the modes of rail and road transport.

Causes of the accident

The principal cause of the accident was the untimely stop of the heavy vehicle during the manoeuvre carried out on the level crossing.

The analysis led to four main causes being highlighted:

- The direct cause of the immobilisation connected to a possible driving error or a technical failure which could not be determined exactly;
- the under-estimation of the risk of the level crossing by the road driver involved led him to carry out a manoeuvre which involved a risk of stopping on the level crossing;
- the absence of information concerning the rules for access and traffic of lorries on the site leading the road driver to follow the erroneous indications of the people present at the scene;

- the lack of clarity, dissemination and preparation of the rules for operating on the working site leading the people working on the base to unduly block the main internal carriageway and give erroneous indications and instructions to the road drivers.

Recommendations

This enquiry led us to formulate five recommendations.

Recommendation R1 (DGITM)

Ensure that the professional organisations that teach drivers of heavy goods vehicles include in their programmes information regarding driving over level crossings and the necessity of avoiding any situation or manoeuvre that could lead to a vehicle being stopped, even momentarily, on the level crossing.

Recommendation R2 (SNCF, Geodis)

Set up an organisation that will ensure the preparation of a safety procedure for any road transport vehicle coming from or going to a railway site.

Note: This organisation must be effective even in the case of sub-contracting.

Recommendation R3 (SNCF)

Specify in the documents organising the co-activity on railway sites, the entity responsible for preparation of the safety procedures.

Recommendation R4 (SNCF, Geodis)

Agree on a safety procedure template including a systematic reminder of the safety information concerning railway sites and level crossings.

Note: This document can be used for training the drivers mentioned in Recommendation R1.

Recommendation R5 (SNCF, RFF)

Formalise the procedure for operating railway sites that receive deliveries by road transport so that the conditions necessary for the safety of road vehicle movements, within the site and close to it, can be provided as soon as those sites are placed in service.