

Rail Safety Regulator: human error behind most train accidents

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19 Oct 2015

Human error accounted for 71% of the rail accidents recorded in South Africa last year, the Rail Safety Regulator said.



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"It was established that the biggest contributing element... was a lack of supervision at the ground level..." the regulator said in a report to Parliament's Transport Committee this week.

The next category of accidents was derailments caused by the failure of operators to maintain worn out wheels, and not carrying out maintenance as scheduled.

Some of the accidents that took place in the period 2014/2015 were:

- 21 March 2014: Four children killed, eight others and vehicle driver injured when vehicle and goods train crashed at level crossing in Rustenburg. It was found that the road markings were fading, rumble strips were worn down and the red light was not flashing.

- 10 May 2014: Manganese train travelling towards De Aar derailed with two electric locomotives and six wagons at Addo

Station. The crew was treated for shock. In this case, findings included the train driver driving at 60km/h instead of 30km/h when crossing the points, among other things.

- 26 June 2014: 200 passengers on board a 17-coach train travelling on a Shosholoza Meyl train between Cradock and Port Elizabeth escaped unscathed when the train derailed at crossover points. It was found that proper inspections were not conducted, the Passenger Rail Agency of SA (Prasa) did not have enough qualified staff at the Wagon and Locomotives Maintenance Department and the train driver did not obey a signal.

- 17 August 2014: Thirteen commuters injured when a train from Cape Town to Worcester experienced an electrical fault and passengers panicked and jumped out of the train. The fault had been reported beforehand, but there was no record of it having been attended to.

- 2 October 2014: Seven commuters and train driver injured when a train to Pretoria from Elandsfontein derailed. Investigators found signage problems, that the train driver did not apply brakes and that substance testing was not done.

Source: News24

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