

[News story: Maintenance train runaway, near Markinch](#)

At around 04:25 hrs on 17 October 2017, a maintenance train ran away for a distance of about 4 miles, from a location north of Markinch station in Fife. The train had struck a tree that had fallen across the track. The resulting damage to the underside of the train had caused the brakes to be irreversibly released.

Prior to the collision, the train had been water jetting leaf debris from the rails. The driver saw the tree shortly before impact and applied the emergency brake. The train was travelling at around 40 mph (64km/h) when it hit the tree.

The train continued to slow following the collision, due to the uphill gradient. It came to a rest, but then started to roll backwards. Having made an emergency call on the train radio, the two train crew jumped from the train onto the trackside and suffered minor injuries.

The train eventually came to a stop on a low point near to Thornton North Junction, after having oscillated up and down the adjacent track gradients several times.

Our investigation will determine the sequence of events that led to the runaway. It will also consider:

- the design of the train's braking system
- the actions of the train crew
- the proximity of other trains on the affected route

Our investigation is independent of any investigation by the railway industry, or by the industry's regulator, the [Office of Rail and Road](#).

We will publish our findings, including any recommendations to improve safety, at the conclusion of our investigation. This report will be available on our website.

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