

[Press release: Report 01/2018: Runaway of a maintenance train near Markinch](#)

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Summary

At about 04:25 hrs on Tuesday 17 October 2017, a maintenance train that was clearing leaf debris from the track, hit a tree just north of Markinch station, Fife. The debris from the tree disabled the train's braking system. The train came to a stop before running away backwards for a distance of about 4.7 miles (7.5 km). The train crew on board made an emergency call to the signaller before jumping off the train, suffering minor injuries.

The train eventually came to a stop at Thornton North junction after running backwards and forwards between two adjacent gradients a total of nine times.

The brakes were fully released when debris from the tree operated the release mechanisms on the brake system distributors underneath both of the vehicles in the train.

The driver was unable to reapply the brakes because the debris from the tree had also separated all three of the brake pipes between the two vehicles in the train.

Recommendations

The RAIB has made two recommendations to Network Rail. The first addresses the risk of a runaway being initiated by debris on the track causing multiple disruptions to the braking system on this type of train. The second recommendation addresses the possibility that similar risks might be present for other short formation trains that operate on its infrastructure.

Notes to editors

1. The sole purpose of RAIB investigations is to prevent future accidents and incidents and improve railway safety. RAIB does not establish blame, liability or carry out prosecutions.
2. RAIB operates, as far as possible, in an open and transparent manner. While our investigations are completely independent of the railway industry, we do maintain close liaison with railway companies and if we discover matters that may affect the safety of the railway, we make sure that information about them is circulated to the right people as soon as

possible, and certainly long before publication of our final report.
3. For media enquiries, please call 01932 440015.

Newsdate: 11 January 2018