

FATAL LEVEL CROSSING ACCIDENT IN LAHTI, FINLAND ON 21 NOVEMBER 2007

On 21 October 2007 at 12.55 p.m., a fatal level crossing accident occurred on an unprotected level crossing along Heikinpellontie road in Lahti. The accident occurred when a car on Heikinpellontie road drove without stopping in front of a locomotive en route from Lahti to Heinola. The driver, who was the sole person in the car, died instantly.

The accident occurred because the driver of the car did not see the train. The level crossing in question meets regulations concerning visibility and crossing angles, but does not meet those concerning wait platforms. It is possible that the driver was not sufficiently vigilant due to familiarity with the crossing and the impression that train traffic was infrequent there.

Rescue operations were somewhat delayed because traffic control called the wrong emergency response centre, and not the emergency response centre that was responsible for the accident site. Further delays were caused by difficulties in locating the accident site.

To prevent similar accidents in the future, the investigation commission recommends that renovation investments planned for the track be speeded up with respect to level crossing security. Several level crossings along the Lahti–Heinola track do not have sufficient visibility, and therefore the investigation commission recommends that the track speed limit be lowered at level crossings to a level that ensures the appropriate safety level.

In order to limit the negative consequences of similar accidents, the investigation commission restates earlier recommendations concerning the ability to make a telephone call directly from the accident site, and improving the compatibility of information used by emergency response centres and traffic control to locate the accident site.