

SUMMARY

FATAL LEVEL CROSSING ACCIDENT IN LOVIISA, FINLAND, ON 17 JULY 2009

On Friday, 17 July 2009, at 9.50am, a level crossing accident took place at the unprotected Rauhalantie level crossing in Loviisa, in which the driver of a car perished after having steered in front of a freight train.

The most probable cause for the accident was the elderly driver's failure to perceive the approaching train. Other underlying causative factors in the accident may include the driver's familiarity with the level crossing and the fact that his physical capabilities were diminished through illnesses and impaired eyesight.

Removing the heavy-traffic Rauhalantie level crossing by constructing a replacing road connection via the road Seppäläntie has been under consideration in Loviisa at least for the past three decades. Pursuant to the safety strategy on level crossings issued by the Finnish Rail Administration, removal of level crossings is the preferred method of improving their safety; therefore, this solution would comply with the strategy. During the investigation, the Loviisa Town Council decided in connection with discussion of the budget for the 2010 fiscal year not to construct the extension to Seppäläntie but to equip the Rauhalantie level crossing with warning installation instead.

In the investigation, it also emerged that the relevant parties hold divergent views on the duty to clear the sightlines at level crossings. The Investigation Commission recommends that the Ministry of Transport and Communications ensure that such consistent guidelines on the duty to clear the sight lines be issued as are acceptable to all parties.

During the investigation, the Finnish Rail Agency and the Finnish Rail Administration were, from the beginning of 2010, organisationally merged with the Finnish Transport Safety Agency (Trafi) and the Finnish Transport Agency, respectively. In this investigation report, the previous names of the agencies are used.