

**RAILWAY OCCURRENCE REPORT**

**DERAILMENT**

**VIA RAIL CANADA INC.  
TRAIN NO. 16  
MILE 123.11, MONT-JOLI SUBDIVISION  
RIMOUSKI, QUEBEC  
20 NOVEMBER 1994**

**REPORT NUMBER R94Q0065**

The Transportation Safety Board of Canada (TSB) investigated this occurrence for the purpose of advancing transportation safety. It is not the function of the Board to assign fault or determine civil or criminal liability.

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### Summary

Eastward VIA Rail Canada Inc. (VIA) passenger train No. 16 was unexpectedly diverted onto a siding at Mile 123.11 of the CN North America (CN) Mont-Joli Subdivision, at Rimouski, Quebec, causing one locomotive and two cars to derail. There were no injuries.

### Other Factual Information

VIA Rail Canada Inc. (VIA) train No. 16 departed Montreal, Quebec, at 1900 eastern standard time (EST), on 20 November 1994, bound for Gaspé, Quebec. At about 0230 EST, it approached the vicinity of the west switch leading to the siding at Rimouski, Quebec (the switch), at Mile 123.11. As the train neared the switch, the first locomotive engineer observed that the target switch displayed green and proceeded. The train was unexpectedly diverted into the siding, and the first locomotive engineer, who was at the controls, immediately applied the train brakes in emergency. The train came to a stop about 100 feet into the siding. After conducting the necessary emergency procedures, the crew determined that locomotive VIA 6427, a coach and a baggage car had derailed. The locomotive was extensively damaged and the coach and baggage cars sustained minor damage. The switch and approximately 100 feet of track were damaged.

The train was powered by locomotive VIA 6427 and consisted of a coach, a baggage car and three sleeper cars. There were 69 passengers and 5 on-board service personnel on the train. The crew of the train included a conductor, an assistant conductor and two locomotive engineers.

Train movements are governed by the Occupancy Control System (OCS) authorized by the Canadian Rail Operating Rules (CROR). Train movements are supervised by a rail traffic controller (RTC) located in Montreal. The maximum speed in the area of Mile 123.11 was 35 mph for both passenger and freight trains. The train was travelling at a speed of 13 mph when it passed through the switch.

The switch was hand-operated with a switch stand and an operating lever. The rod connecting the switch stand to the switch points is secured by a bolt and cotter pin. As with all main track switches, the operating lever is secured with a padlock. Keys for such padlocks are closely controlled by the railway company and only issued to those who require them in the course of their duties.

Standard reflectorized targets display either green or red. When the green target is displayed, it indicates that the switch is lined for the main track; when the red target is displayed, it indicates that the switch is lined for a diverging route.

An examination of the switch at the occurrence site revealed that the bolt which connects the switch stand to the switch points was missing and the switch points were forced partially open by pieces of masonry bricks. The connecting rod was damaged and disconnected. The padlock securing the operating lever was locked and in the correct position.

The track was last inspected by the assistant roadmaster in a Hi-rail vehicle on 18 November 1994; no defects were noted.

The weather was clear, with light winds, and a temperature of four degrees Celsius.

The last two trains to operate over the switch were travelling westward at approximately 2130 EST Saturday, 19 November 1994, and at approximately 0105 Sunday, 20 November 1994, respectively. They travelled over the switch in a trailing point direction and neither train crew noticed anything abnormal at the switch location.

CN records reveal that four cases of vandalism were reported at Rimouski between 24 May 1994 and 02 December 1994. The cases involved gunshots directed at a passenger train, cement blocks and pieces of metal obstructing the main track and vandalism to five switch locks. Anonymous letters threatening the well being of railway operations in the area have been received by the Rimouski Municipal Police.

### **Analysis**

The locomotive and the following two cars derailed at the open switch. The operating crew had no warning that the switch was partially open as the target switch displayed green, indicating that the switch was lined for the main track.

The fact that the bolt was missing and the switch points were forced open indicates that a person or persons with some knowledge of the operation of a railway track switch tampered with the switch.

In OCS territory, there is no electronic means to indicate that a switch has been misaligned.

### **Findings**

1. Train operation at the time of derailment conformed to company instructions and government safety standards.
2. The switch target at Mile 123.11 displayed green, indicating that the switch was lined for the main track.
3. The switch had been tampered with, resulting in the derailment of the locomotive and two cars.
4. The bolt securing the connecting rod from the switch stand to the switch points was missing and pieces of masonry blocks were used to force the switch points open.

### **Cause**

The derailment was a result of vandalism to the switch by an unknown person or unknown persons.

This report concludes the Transportation Safety Board's investigation into this occurrence. Consequently, the Board, consisting of Chairperson, John W. Stants, and members Zita Brunet and Hugh MacNeil, authorized the release of this report on 16 August 1995.