

# Transport Minister orders expedited investigation after Germiston train crash

By [Linda Ensor](#)

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Transport Minister Joe Maswanganyi has directed the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR) and the Passenger Rail Agency of SA (Prasa) to expedite the investigation into the cause of a collision between two Metrorail trains at Geldenhuys station, east of Johannesburg on Tuesday.



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Both trains were authorised to travel on the same line toward Springs from Johannesburg. It is estimated that about 226 passengers were injured, 67 of which sustained moderate injuries while 159 had minor ones. Most of the injuries were the result of emergency brakes being applied by the driver of the incoming train.

The RSR said in a statement that on the section of the railway concerned, trains had to be manually authorised by control officials because the normal signaling system was not available due to problems associated with its cables. Train 4317 was manually authorised to enter a platform at Geldenhuys station.

Immediately after entering the station the train failed as a result of a technical problem and first-line responders were requested to assist.

"While Train 4317 was stationary at the platform, Train 0723 was authorised to enter the station. Information received from the RSR inspectors indicate human error can be attributed to the Train 0723 being authorised into the same platform, which subsequently resulted in a rear-end collision," the regulator said in a statement.



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Meanwhile, the minister directed Prasa to fast-track its plans to modernise rail services including expediting the process to replace all existing signaling interlocking, which consists mainly of obsolete mechanical and electro-mechanical systems, with electronic interlocking.

"A budget of about R5.6bn has been set aside for the signaling modernisation [for] 2015 to 2018, as we know our rail network has previously been characterised by years of disinvestment by the apartheid regime. Cable theft remains one of the major challenges that keep on undermining our determination and efforts to provide a safe and secure railway experience for all South Africans," Maswanganyi said.

Trains running between Johannesburg and Germiston were running on a single line with delays in scheduling.

The RSR will brief the media on Wednesday on the regulator's investigations into the level-crossing accident in the Free State and the status of the collision between two Metrorail trains in Johannesburg.

The regulator has concluded its preliminary investigation into the collision between the Shosholoza Meyl train and a truck at the Geneva level-crossing in the Free State on 4 January 2018, in which at least 18 people died. This caused the train to derail and five coaches to catch fire. The regulator concluded that the level of protection at the crossing was in line with requirements and that the driver of the truck had tested negative for alcohol.



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The level-crossing is located on a gravel road that is protected by advanced warning signs and a stop sign. Furthermore, the railway line is equipped with whistle-boards on either side of the level-crossing. Maswanganyi has instructed the RSR to institute a board of inquiry to investigate the incident.

DA transport spokesperson Manny de Freitas said the collision in Germiston had, once again, shown that Prasa was unable to guarantee the safety of passengers on its trains.

"In view of these recurring accidents, there is a need to institute a comprehensive review of rail safety to ensure urgent remedial action is taken to improve rail safety. It is grossly unfair that while Prasa loses millions of rands to corruption, millions of commuters are left to grapple with a compromised and unsafe rail system," De Freitas said. "For far too long, Prasa and Minister Maswanganyi have turned a blind eye to our collapsing rail infrastructure."

Source: BDpro

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