Zeitschrift: Swiss express: the Swiss Railways Society journal

Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society

Band: 3 (1991-1993)

Heft: 6

Artikel: The worst railway accident in Switzerland

Autor: Pinner, Richard

DOI: https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-855206

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. Mehr erfahren

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. En savoir plus

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. Find out more

Download PDF: 30.11.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, https://www.e-periodica.ch

 Multi-system traction may pass only with lowered pantographs.

(Exception: if only one pantograph is raised, and this pantograph can be used to collect current from both systems, then only the main circuit breaker should be opened.)

 Single-system traction may pass only with all pantographs lowered, or must stop short of the signal.

b) Endsignal:

air Yellow board with vertical black band above number. The numb indicates the curre it system after the neutral section, and has the same meaning as on the zone signal (below).



 Multi-system traction, after setting up to receive the current system displayed on the Endsignal, may again take power from the overhead wires.

Zone signals

Zone signals of this type display, for the information of personnel, which current is in use in a switchable section.

The numbers indicate:

		000
Number	Current system	
0	Current turned off	-
11	11,000 Volts, 16 2/3 Hz	
15	15,000 Volts, 16 2/3 Hz	
25	25,000 Volts, 50 Hz	
3-	3,000 Volts, direct current	
1-	1,500 Volts, direct current	

Next instalment: RhB, FO & MOB

The Worst Railway Accident in Switzerland

On 14 June 1891, on the Basel-Delémont line of the Jura-Simplon Railway, the worst rail accident in Switzerland occured.

It was a fine Sunday and many people had visited a music festival in Münchenstein. Such was the demand for seats that the 14:15 from Basel was strengthened by a further two coaches which in turn meant that the steamhauled train had to be double headed. The train consisted of two B3/4 locomotives, a luggage van, a postal van, an express freight van and a further ten coaches, totalling some 324t.

The heavily loaded train set off and was travelling at around 50 km/h approaching the bridge across the River Birs, where speed was reduced to 35 km/h. The first locomotive crossed the bridge, but as it reached the further bank, the spans collapsed and the second locomotive and the first two coaches fell into the river. Five more coaches followed them into the gap, leaving the eighth coach perched

precariously on the edge. The remaining two passenger coaches and the vans remained on the tracks.

Such was the force of the impact that the seven coaches in the river were reduced from 85m to as little as 20m. There were 210 people in that part of the train, of these 73 lost their lives, but some 60 were rescued from the wreckage with hardly any injuries.

Clearing the tangled mass from the river took a considerable time and to speed the task, night working was carried out with the aid of the Gotthard generator coach, which can now be seen in the Transport Museum at Luzern.

The subsequent enquiry found that the bridge had been damaged by flooding in 1881 and had not been properly repaired. To add to this, it was strengthened in 1880 to enable heavier locomotives of the Jura Simplon to pass across, and this work was not properly carried out as well!

Richard Pinner