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Two digital photos showing the severe damage between Brig and Visp. The BVZ line can be seen on the right.

Photos: Courtesy Fotoservice SBB

After the considerable disruption to the railway network in Switzerland earlier in the year due to the effects of snow and wind, further problems arose in the middle of October as a result of very heavy rainfall.

Heavy rain fell on the 14th and 15th October, and by lunchtime on the 15th the situation was so severe with flooding and landslides that the local police were recommending that no cars be driven in the Canton. A number of railway lines were affected and it was not until early November that services in the region were fully restored. The most serious flood damage was between Brig and Leuk (SBB) and Brig and St Niklaus (BVZ). Both the SBB and the BVZ have acknowledged the help provided by the military in restoring their lines, which happened much sooner than had been originally anticipated. As a direct result of the problems and the closures of both the Simplon and Mont Cenis Tunnels, a record 170,202 tonnes of freight was transported over the Gotthard line on 19th October.



15th October

At lunchtime the following lines were reported as closed:

- SBB - Sierre - Brig - Domodossola
St Maurice - Sion - trains from Lausanne turned at St Maurice
St Maurice - St Gingolphe
- BLS - Kandersteg - Brig - local service only Spiez - Kandersteg
- BVZ - Brig - Zermatt
- FO - Brig - Oberwald - the road was also closed
- MO - Martigny - Orsières
- TPC - Bex - Gryon - reopened (date not known) but train observed on 30th October

16th October

- SBB - St Maurice - Martigny - service resumed during afternoon
St Maurice - St Gingolphe - service resumed
Cadenazzo - Luino - trains replaced buses due to flooded road!
- BLS - Kandersteg - Brig - the first northbound InterCity train left Brig at 11:00 hrs
- BVZ - Brig - Zermatt - bus replacement service in place Brig - St Niklaus. It was reported that 15 km of track had been damaged and it was not sure whether there would be through trains before the end of the year.
- FO - Brig - Oberwald - trains working through the base tunnel from Andermatt to Oberwald, where there is a bus connection to Betten. From here it was only possible to take the cable car to Bettmeralp, walk to Riederalp, down the cable car to Ried-Mörel and then by road to Brig.
- MO - Martigny - Orsières - service resumed

17th October

- SBB - Martigny - Sierre - trains start working again
Sierre - Brig - bus replacement service in place
- BLS - Kandersteg - Goppenstein - autoverlad restarted
- FO - Brig - Oberwald - bus replacement service in place

19th October

- BVZ - St Niklaus - Zermatt - reopened

20th October

- SBB - Brig - Domodossola - because of a landslide danger near Iselle, the line remained closed
- FO - Oberwald - Fiesch - reopened. Glacier Express restarted with a bus connection between Fiesch (FO) and St Niklaus (BVZ)

21st October

- SBB - Brig - Domodossola - regional services restart. There was still a danger of landslides, and if one had occurred would have caused problems rerouting long distance trains at short notice.

23rd October

- SBB - Brig - Domodossola - Bern - Milano services restart.
- BLS - Brig - Domodossola - Car transporter services in operation because Simplon road is still closed.

25th October

- SBB - Brig - Leuk - regional services restart
Brig - Sierre - remained closed for through traffic.

3rd November

- FO - Brig - Fiesch - scheduled to reopen

8th November

- SBB - Brig - Sierre - scheduled to reopen for through traffic. The first scheduled working to be train 220 Venezia - Geneva which departs Brig at 04:20 hrs.
- BVZ - Brig - St Niklaus - scheduled to reopen, but still much work to be done

Acknowledgments: BahnCH and SwissRail Internet discussion groups and SBB/CFF press releases.