

News story: Trailer runaway near Hope

At around 06:30 hrs on Sunday 28 May 2017, a trailer being propelled by a small tractor (known as a 'gator') between Edale and Bamford, became detached and ran away for a distance reported to have been around 1.5 miles (2.4 km), before coming to rest at a set of points near Hope. The gator's machine operator followed in the gator to warn anyone on the track of the approach of the trailer. Afterwards, the draw bolt and locking pin which secured the trailer to the gator was reportedly found to have come out. The trailer was fitted with brakes on two wheels of its four wheels. The brakes are spring applied and, when coupled to the gator, are released hydraulically. However, when the trailer is used independently, the brakes are manually released using demountable handles. The hydraulic hose connecting the trailer's hydraulic system to the gator reportedly pulled out when the trailer broke away.

The gator and trailer had been put on the track at Grindleford and driven to Edale to convey four staff from Edale to Cowburn Tunnel where they were to remedy a number of track faults. On the journey, the machine operator reported that the gator and trailer were slow and sluggish and later, between Edale and Cowburn Tunnel, sparks were reported coming from wheels on the trailer. Once inside the tunnel, it was found that the brakes on the trailer were applied and could not be hydraulically released. For the return journey at around 06:00 hrs, the brakes were manually released using the demountable handles which, at some stage, were tied in the release position.

After dropping the four staff at Edale, the machine operator continued alone towards an access point at Bamford. He reported that he stopped to take a telephone call and then noticed the trailer slowly running away down the gradient. A gang, who had earlier been working on the points where the trolley came to rest, had left the track. There were no level crossings or footpath crossings on the route of the runaway. The machine operator reported receiving an upper body injury when the gator suffered a jolt while following the trailer.

The RAIB's investigation will seek to understand the sequence of events and the circumstances leading to the trailer running away, the maintenance condition of the gator and trailer and any relevant management issues.

Our investigation is independent of any investigation by the railway industry, the [British Transport Police](#) or by the industry's regulator, the [Office of Rail and Road](#).

We will publish our findings, including any recommendations to improve safety, at the conclusion of our investigation. This report will be available on our website.

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