

The worst railway accident in Switzerland

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Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal**

Band (Jahr): **3 (1991-1993)**

Heft 6

PDF erstellt am: **10.07.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-855206>

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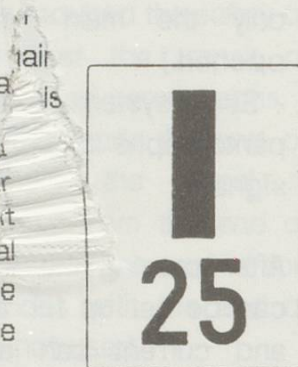
- Multi-system traction may pass only with lowered pantographs.

(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:

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

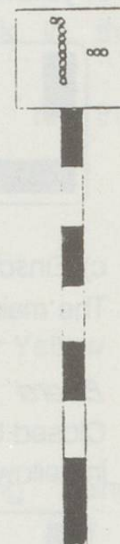


Zone signals

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

The numbers indicate:

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



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

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 occurred.

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 steam-hauled 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