

Safety Notice

Accident at a level crossing
Estaimpuis – 21/05/2026

REPORT VERSION TABLE

Version number	Subject of revision	Date
1.0	First version	09/06/2026

For ease of reading, the masculine form is used to refer to certain roles, but these terms apply to all people.

Any use of this report with a different aim than of accident prevention - for example in order to attribute liability - individual or collective blame in particular - would be a complete distortion of the aims of this notice, the methods used to assemble it, the selection of facts collected, the nature of questions posed and the ideas organising it, to which the notion of liability is unknown. The conclusions which could be deduced from this would therefore be abusive in the literal sense of the term.

In case of contradiction between certain words and terms, it is necessary to refer to the French version.

1. Facts

On 21 May 2026, at around 07:03 a.m., the driver of SNCB/NMBS train E3227 (Ath – Kortrijk) noticed a car on the tracks at level crossing 11 on line 75A in Estaimpuis.

He performed an emergency braking, but the collision could not be avoided. The occupant of the vehicle died instantly.

2. Circumstances of the event

2.1. Geographical situation

Location: Estaimpuis (Hainaut)



2.2. Weather conditions

It was a sunny day.

3. Infrastructure involved

3.1. Railway infrastructure

The train was running on line 75A, an electrified double-track line linking Mouscron and Froyennes. The reference speed is 140 km/h, and at level crossing 11, the speed signalled for the train was 140 km/h.

3.2. Level crossing

Level crossing 11 on line 75A is fitted with active signalling with two half-barriers.



Illustration: view of level crossing 11 from Rue de Tournai

As the train approaches, and thanks to a train arrival detection system located in the track in rear of the level crossing, the following happens automatically:

- the white lights go out;
- the red lights come on;
- an audible signal begins to sound to alert any users of the level crossing who may be at the level crossing that they must clear it;
- the barriers go down;
- as soon as the barriers are closed (horizontal position), the audible signal stops sounding.

Once the train has passed and provided there is no other train traffic approaching the level crossing:

- the barriers go up;
- as soon as the barriers are raised again (vertical position), the red lights go out;
- the white lights come on.

3.3. Road infrastructure



Source: Google Maps

Rue de la Fournette and Rue de Tournai lead to the level crossing.

Level crossing 11 is located outside a built-up area, in a rural area.

The speed limit at this location is 90 km/h.

The A41 warning signs indicating the level crossing with barriers can be found on Rue de la Fournette and Rue de Tournai. The red colour of the border of the A41 sign on Rue de la Fournette has faded.



Illustration: general view of the approach to level crossing 11 via Rue de la Fournette, along which the A41 warning sign is positioned approximately 150 metres from the level crossing (visible in the background of the photo, along with the electrical installations of the railway line)

The car came from Rue de la Fournette and was heading towards Rue de Tournai. In the last 50 metres before reaching the level crossing, the sun was in the road user's eyes.



Illustration: photo showing the approach to the level crossing under conditions similar to those on the day of the accident (time, weather, position of the sun). In this reconstruction photo, level crossing 11 is open.



The photo shown here was taken under conditions similar to those on the day of the accident (time, weather, position of the sun), from inside a vehicle that was stationary in front of closed level crossing 11.

4. Train involved

SNCB/NMBS train E3227 was running from Ath (06:29 a.m.) to Kortrijk (07:22 a.m.).

It consisted of six M7 carriages.

5. Damage and impact

5.1. Physical injuries

The victim has died.

5.2. Material damage

Visible damage was observed on M7 carriage 75020 (at the head of train E3227), affecting the following components:

- Automatic coupling
- Guard-iron
- Horn
- Bottom spoiler
- Footboard at the front (L + R)
- Flange-lubricating device
- Complete front fairing

As regards the infrastructure, the accident necessitated:

- the re-securing of the beacon, which, although damaged, is still in working order;
- the repositioning of the axle counter.

As regards the level crossing equipment, the accident necessitated:

- the replacement of the level crossing barrier;
- the replacement of the level crossing marker post (located 50 metres from the level crossing).

5.3. Impact on train traffic

Train type	Cancelled	Delayed (minutes)
Passenger trains	37	1 (3)
Freight trains	-	-
International trains	-	1 (1)

6. Conclusions

During the inspection carried out following the accident, the Infrabel teams, in the presence of the police, confirmed that the equipment at level crossing 11 on line 75A (warning bell, red lights, barriers) was functioning correctly.

During his on-site investigation the day after the accident, the investigator from the Investigation Unit observed the presence of the A41 warning sign indicating the presence of the level crossing approximately 150 metres in advance, both on Rue de la Fournette and Rue de Tournai. However, the red colour of the border of the sign on Rue de la Fournette has almost completely faded.

A level crossing is a vulnerable point of the road network. The arrival of a train causes traffic to be halted, which may take road users by surprise.

A level crossing is indicated by an A41 or A43 sign: in the Belgian traffic regulations, warning signs can be recognised by their triangular shape with a white background and a red border. They indicate a risk or a situation requiring particular vigilance.

In the event of glare from the sun, the driver is required, in accordance with Article 10.1 of the Belgian traffic regulations, to adjust their speed and driving behaviour to the visibility conditions. In the event of reduced visibility, drivers must slow down or even stop if safety cannot be ensured.

7. Important points to note

- Strictly enforce all signalling, whether active or passive, in the vicinity of any level crossing.
- Adopt a cautious and proactive approach, whilst being prepared to stop if necessary.
- Implement measures to prevent glare, in particular by ensuring good visibility (a clean windscreen, appropriate use of sun visors, increased vigilance in the event of low sun or dazzling headlights).

Rail Accident and Incident Investigation Unit

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