

Summary of the incident

On Sunday 28 May 2017, a trailer was being propelled between Edale and Bamford by a small rail-mounted tractor, known by its brand name 'gator'. At around 06:30 hrs, the trailer became detached and ran away for a distance of around 1 mile (1.6 km). It came to a stop at a set of points at Earles Sidings, near Hope. The gator's machine operator followed in the gator to warn anyone on the track of the approach of the trailer.

The towbar pin and its associated linch pin, which secured the trailer to the gator, had come out and the hydraulic hose connecting the trailer's brake system to the gator was disconnected.

The operation of the trailer's brakes had also been mechanically disabled as a result of problems earlier in the shift, during which the brakes had been stuck in the applied position.

This was done by attaching the brake handle and using a strap to apply the pressure to mechanically override the braking system.

Summary of conclusions

Immediate cause

The trailer ran away on the gradient because it became uncoupled from the gator while the trailer brakes were disabled.

Causal factors

The causal factors were: The trailer became physically separated from the gator. This causal factor arose due to a combination of the following: the coupling pin at the trailer end of the towbar had fallen out; and the hydraulic hose between the gator and the trailer was not correctly connected at the time that the towbar coupling pin fell out

The operation of the brakes on the trailer had been disabled by the staff to allow its recovery. This causal factor arose because of the following: The brakes were stuck on, probably because the hydraulic brake hose between the gator and the trailer was not correctly connected when they were on-tracked