

# Cable theft can lead to loss of life - Martins

The ramifications of cable theft could have cost those injured in the Pretoria train collision their lives, says Transport Minister Ben Martins.



(Image: GCIS)

Speaking after meeting with Metrorail following a collision between two passenger trains between the Cor Delfos and Kalafong stations in Pretoria on Thursday, Martins said the accident could have had fatal consequences.

At about 0710 yesterday morning, train number 9017 collided into the rear of train 9009 between the two stations. The trains had been en route to Saulsville from Pretoria Station.

A total of 300 people were injured. Aside from one passenger and the driver, who both sustained critical injuries, eight others sustained serious injuries and the rest of the passengers sustained minor injuries.

The driver is being treated at Milpark Hospital.

"This issue [of cable theft] in the past has been regarded as theft of copper. The ramifications of cable theft are graver than the mere stealing of copper. This morning a train driver and passengers were seriously injured. If it was a head-on collision, the accident might have been fatal for a number of South Africans," he said.

"It is time that we regard cable theft as attempted homicide or attempted murder because the results, if passengers die, will amount to that," said Martins, adding that his department was in talks with the Departments of Police and Justice and Constitutional Development on the matter.

At a media briefing at the Kalafong station, chief executive officer of Prasa Rail Operations, Mosenngwa Mofi, said there had been a case of cable theft reported just after midnight.

Two cables were reportedly stolen.

"The accident should be seen in the context of the theft that took place this morning. The detail of what could have led directly to the incident itself is subject to investigation," said Mofi.

Mofi said the particulars of the accident would be available at a later stage, with a preliminary report likely to be released next week.

"When the cables are stolen, it affects our signalling system. We then move over to manual operations - that is abnormal operations. This morning's service was run under abnormal operations," he said, adding that this was a precautionary measure that also involved trains being driven slowly.

Cable theft, said the CEO, had a direct impact on the service rendered to commuters as trains did not arrive on time.

Martins, his deputy Sindisiwe Chikunga and other officials walked to the nearby busy Kalafong Hospital to get an update on those who had been admitted. Other passengers were admitted to various hospitals.

Martins said there was a need to look at the replacement of copper with other materials.

"With the planning of the Gautrain, the cable system was planned and sealed so that there is no easy access to steal or sabotage cables. We are looking at technologies to substitute copper with other materials," said the minister.

In May 2011, a Metrorail train travelling from Mzimhlophe station towards Phomolong station in Orlando collided with a stationary Soweto Business Express train, injuring just over 700 people.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>