

# Metrorail refutes claims of incompetent train driver

PRETORIA: Metrorail has refuted claims suggesting that one of the train drivers involved in last Thursday's train collision near Kalafong had previously been involved in a similar accident.



Two passenger trains collided between the Cor Delfos and Kalafong stations in Pretoria this week injuring around 300 people.

According to Metrorail, one of the train drivers involved in the accident, Gert Kotze, joined the rail industry in 1977 as a train assistant and in his entire 36-year commuter train operating career, he has never been involved in a train collision.

"According to our official internal disciplinary records, Kotze previously had only one case for an offense that was not related to train collision and was given an appropriate sanction of 12 months written notice expiring end of this month.

"This offense was aggravated by violent commuter behaviour towards him involving emotional and physical assault," said Metrorail.

Kotze, in his capacity as a section manager, was last assessed in August 2012 and met all requirements to declare him competent to drive trains, amongst other duties.

Metrorail said he had also received several awards relating to train safety and bravery which the last award was presented to him on 17 November 2012.

The company said that without "pre-empting the outcome of the Board of Inquiry appointed to investigate the cause and the contributing factors to the occurrence, Kotze's competence to the time of the regrettable accident is not questionable".

Tembela Kulu, provincial manager, Metrorail Gauteng said the train collision was regrettable and wished Kotze and the nine commuters still hospitalised at Kalafong and One Military hospitals respectively and all other commuters who suffered injuries and trauma as a result of the accident a speedy and complete recovery.

The train service between Saulsville and Pretoria is still not operational and buses have been arranged as an alternative transport for all weekly and monthly train ticket holders.

An internal Board of Inquiry led by a senior executive has been appointed to investigate in detail the cause of the accident. Anyone with information that can assist in the investigation process is advised to contact the the police on +27 (0)123152566 or +27(0)12 3152777.

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