

## Via Rail train crash caused by speeding, investigators say

Natalie Stechyson, Postmedia News March 1, 2012



*Rescue crews stand on top of a flipped over Via Rail train after a derailment in Burlington, Ontario, Canada, Sunday, February 26, 2012.*

***Photograph by: Tyler Anderson, Postmedia News/MCT***

The Via Rail train that derailed in Ontario this past weekend, killing three workers and injuring dozens of passengers, was travelling more than four times the allowable speed as it switched tracks.

The Transportation Safety Board on Thursday released the results of its preliminary investigation, saying speed was what caused the train to jump the tracks Sunday.

The train's speed was "enhanced" when it left the station and it never slowed down, said Tom Griffith, the investigator in charge.

A train needs to slow down before switching tracks, Griffith said. On this particular stretch in Burlington, Ont., trains are supposed to slow to 24 kilometres per hour from 129 km/h.

Passenger train 92 was going 107 km/hour on Sunday as it switched tracks in Burlington, about 60 kilometres southwest of Toronto.

"It revealed that brakes were not applied," Griffith said of the train's black box.

He said it is not the job of the Transportation Safety Board to lay blame.

"No crew sets out to have an accident, but sadly this crew paid the ultimate price. They lost their lives."

Three Via Rail employees — two senior locomotive engineers and a trainee — were killed when the locomotive and five cars jumped the tracks as the train switched tracks — an everyday procedure akin to changing lanes on a highway.

Emergency crews were not able to extract the bodies until 8 p.m., nearly five hours after the crash.

On Monday, Via Rail identified the engineers who died as Ken Simmonds, 56, Peter Snarr, 52, and Patrick Robinson, 40.

The accident seriously injured three passengers — they and 42 others were taken to hospital. The three most seriously injured suffered a broken leg, a back injury and a heart attack. One passenger was reportedly ejected from the train through a broken window.

Five passengers remain in hospital.

Lawyers representing passengers who were on board the Via Rail train have filed a class-action lawsuit against Via Rail and CN.

The company's thoughts and prayers remain with the victims and their families, as well as with those passengers injured, Via's president and CEO Marc Laliberte said in a statement posted early Thursday to Via's website.

"In my own 32-year career in Canada's railways, I have never experienced so much pain and sadness and, like my colleagues, so much helplessness in a position of so much authority," Laliberte said.

"But I know we will all remember that day, Sunday February 26, 2012, and as we move forward, the memory of these events will sustain our efforts and commitment to safety of train travel for

our passengers, our employees and all Canadians. For that is the best way to honour the memory of Ken, Peter and Patrick."

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