



Approved: February 25, 2025

Preliminary Report RRD25FR006

This information is preliminary and subject to change.

Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority Train Fire and Passenger Evacuation

Ridley Park, Pennsylvania
February 6, 2025

On February 6, 2025, about 5:56 p.m. local time, the lead railcar (railcar 132) of Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) Regional Rail train 3223 caught fire as the train departed Crum Lynne Station in Ridley Park, Pennsylvania.¹ (See figure.) Train 3223 was traveling from West Trenton, New Jersey, to Newark, Delaware. There were about 325 passengers and 4 crew members on board the train. There were no injuries or fatalities. SEPTA estimated damages to equipment to be about \$10 million. Visibility conditions at the time of the accident were overcast with light mist; the temperature was 37°F.

¹ All times in this report are local times.

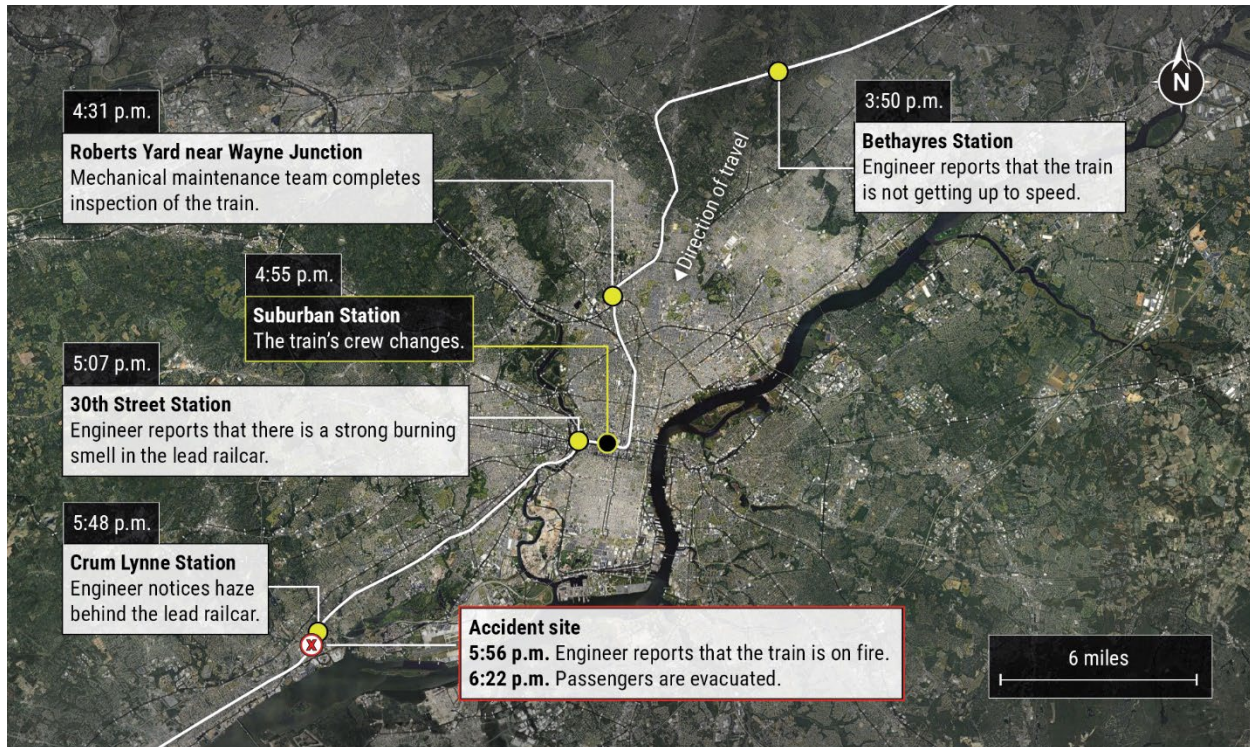


Figure. Timeline of events that led to the fire on train 3223.

The accident site had four main tracks and train 3223 was traveling on main track 4. Train 3223 consisted of 6 railcars.² The lead railcar (railcar 132) was followed by railcar 131, and railcar 288 was the rear railcar. About 4:55 p.m., there was a change of crew at Suburban Station, where crew 404 handed the train over to crew 462 (the crew operating the train at the time of the accident). Crew 462 consisted of an engineer, a conductor, an assistant conductor, and a conductor trainee.

On the day of the accident, about 3:50 p.m., when the train was at Bethayres Station, the engineer of crew 404 contacted SEPTA’s Regional Rail Operations Control Center (RROCC) in Philadelphia and informed the dispatcher that the train was sluggish and not getting up to speed, and that a fault light on the train was on.³ The dispatcher arranged for a mechanical maintenance team to inspect the train on the main track near SEPTA’s Roberts Yard.⁴ About 4:31 p.m., the mechanical maintenance team completed their inspection and contacted the superintendent of

² The railcars belonged to the Silverliner IV fleet.

³ Conversations between the engineers of train 3223 and the RROCC are all from the RROCC’s audio recordings.

⁴ *Roberts Yard* is located south of Wayne Junction, which was on the train’s route to Crum Lynne Station.

train operations at the RROCC and reported that three railcars (132, 131, and 288) were “bad” and causing the slow acceleration of the train. However, the train continued to operate. About 5:07 p.m., when the train was at 30th Street Station, the engineer of crew 462 received a call from SEPTA’s chief dispatcher at the RROCC. The engineer reported that there was a strong burning smell in the lead railcar. The train still continued to operate en route.

Shortly before the accident, about 5:48 p.m., as the train reached Crum Lynne Station, the engineer noticed haze behind the lead railcar. As the train departed Crum Lynne Station, the engineer saw smoke behind the lead railcar and stopped the train about 638 feet south of Crum Lynne Station. The engineer stepped down to inspect the train and, about 5:56 p.m., reported that the lead railcar was on fire.⁵ The crew lowered the pantograph on the train and moved passengers to the rear railcars of the train.⁶ The crew then established track protection on the adjacent track (main track 3) and evacuated the passengers through the rear of the train. Evacuation was complete about 6:22 p.m. and the fire was extinguished about 8:09 p.m.

While on scene, National Transportation Safety Board investigators examined railroad equipment and track conditions, reviewed data from surveillance cameras and the lead railcar’s event recorder, reviewed radio communications from train 3223, retrieved the inward-facing and outward-facing image recorders in the lead railcar for further investigation, and completed interviews.

The National Transportation Safety Board’s investigation is ongoing. Future investigative activity will focus on identifying the source of the fire; inspecting the electrical wiring in the railcars; evaluating SEPTA’s railcar inspection, maintenance, and repair process; and the RROCC’s response to en route train failures.

Parties to the investigation include the Federal Railroad Administration; SEPTA; Amtrak; the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen; and the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers.

⁵ The engineer called the Amtrak Consolidated National Operations Center in Wilmington, Delaware, from where train movements at Crum Lynne Station are coordinated.

⁶ A *pantograph* is the electrical equipment installed on the roof of trains to obtain electrical energy from an overhead power line.