

Beat: Travel

Train derailment in DR Congo kills more than 30, injures dozens

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USPA News - A speeding passenger train derailed in the Democratic Republic of Congo on Tuesday, killing more than 30 people and injuring dozens, witnesses in the Central African country told local media. It comes just two months after three separate train accidents killed 20. The latest accident happened on Tuesday when a train belonging to the Congo National Railway Company (SNCC) derailed on a slope near the Katongola bridge, located about 50 kilometers (31 miles) from the city of Kamina in the country's southeastern province of Katanga, local media reported.

Radio Okapi, which is backed by the United Nations (UN) and is one of the country's leading stations, said more than 30 people were killed in the accident while 55 others were injured. It said information about the derailment was confirmed by the Congo National Railway Company, though it was unclear whether anyone was still trapped in the wreckage of the train. "We observed that the train changed speed. It seemed like the train's engine went out of control, and the locomotive and the coach fell," one of the passengers was quoted as saying by Radio Okapi. "When the coach fell, I tried to escape. I have pain and I want to be treated for that." The witness said he was unable to find three people who had been sitting next to him on the train. "I do not see them. We'll have to raise the coaches to see who is stuck under. Until now, there's been no help whatsoever," he said. "The driver of the locomotive also died. Everybody who was in the coach died." Radio Okapi said the train was traveling from Kamina to the town of Mwene-Ditu in neighboring Kasai-Oriental province, but no other details were immediately available. The state-run Congolese News Agency (ACP) did not mention the accident in Tuesday's dispatches, though news from the country is often slow to emerge. The Democratic Republic of Congo, which has endured political and social turmoil since gaining independence from Belgium in 1960, relies on a rail network that was built more than 100 years ago. Most of the network has received little to no maintenance since 1960, even though trains and planes are the most important means of transport in a vast country with few paved roads outside the capital Kinshasa. Tuesday's accident followed three separate train accidents in February, killing a total of at least 20 people and highlighting the poor state of the country's rail network. The most recent major train accident happened in August 2007 when a train overturned near Benaleka in Kasai-Occidental province, killing at least 100 people and injuring 220 others.

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