

## Autumn Leaves

As the leaves turn yellow and cascade in a colourful stream towards the ground, loco drivers tend to look at the trees and curse, or say their prayers, depending on their opinion of religion. The dreaded season of leaves on the line has arrived. To avoid the dreaded risk of SPADS (Signal passed at danger) the loco driver must apply just enough power to keep the train moving as he goes up an incline, but be able to stop quickly, should the Signal change to STOP. Or even more feared, if going down an incline, at a snails pace, will the train be able stop, and not just slide through a STOP Signal?

Passenger EMUs can usually, survive these annual battles, with the timetable looking somewhat battered, though they are at risk of getting stuck at certain notorious places. However, the Freight Train Driver can only hope that his years of experience, the wind being in the right direction, there being no Stop Signals, will enable him to keep going, but to be able to stop if absolutely necessary. The very variable weight, length, and braking power of the Freight Waggon cause the Driver to rely on the sheer weight and power of the Locomotive to exert control over an unresponsive train, and hope that, for instance the train does not split, with a coupling breaking. Nowadays, this is rare, but it was not always so.

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