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Safety in the Channel Tunnel

Following the declarations on Tuesday, 1 February about safety rules in the Channel Tunnel and their possible evolution, Patrick Kron, Chairman and CEO of Alstom, re-states that the safety rules remain under the exclusive responsibility of the appropriate authorities - the Inter-Governmental Commission – and not of Eurotunnel nor of Eurostar.

Today, these rules lay down two essential conditions:

- A concentrated power system (power cars at the front and back end of the train-set) to avoid all possible risk of fire along the length of the train, contrary to the distributed power system;
- A train length of 400 metres, which is greater than the distance between the Tunnel's existing emergency exits (located at every 375 metres), thus allowing a safe evacuation.

Alstom, which, like its competitor in the Eurostar tender, is in a position to offer trains using the two technologies – distributed or concentrated power – is not aware of any safety study likely to conclude that either one or other of these present conditions for Tunnel traffic could be lifted. Simple declarations or mock evacuation exercises cannot take the place of a full safety study.

It is absurd to state that it is a political and not a technical choice to allow – or not allow - trains non-compliant with the present rules to operate in the tunnel. This declaration aims to pressure the authorities who have jurisdiction in the matter of safety to adapt the rules to a specific train type, whereas, in all parts of the world, it is the trains which are adapted to safety rules and not the reverse.

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