

French rail sabotage plays havoc with Paris Olympics opening

Everything was in place.

Streets in the centre of Paris have been blocked off, metro stations closed and thousands of police, soldiers and other guards deployed to maintain security on the big showpiece day to kick off the Olympics.

But the saboteurs struck away from the capital, at five apparently unguarded places.

France's state-owned rail company SNCF says the saboteurs either vandalised or tried to vandalise five signal boxes and electricity installations between 01:00 and 05:30 on Friday.

One site was at Courtalain, east of Le Mans and 150km to the south-west of Paris. The local community's social media page posted a picture of burnt-out cables in a shallow gulley, with its protective SNCF paving stones discarded.

SNCF spoke of a "massive, large-scale attack aimed at paralysing" its services, involving arson and theft targeting cabling, not just at Courtalain but at Pagny-sur-Moselle, a village outside the eastern city of Metz and Croisilles, not far from the northern city of Arras.

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