INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2587

THE ATCHISON, TOPEKA & SANTA FE RAILWAY COMPANY

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT

NEAR HOBART, CALIF., ON

MAY 13, 1942

SUMMARY

Railroad:	Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe
Date:	May 13, 1942
Location:	Hobart, Calif.
Kind of accident:	Collision at highway grade crossing
Equipment involved:	Passenger train : Motor truck
Train number:	First 73
Engine numbers:	Diesel-electric 2 and 2-A
Consist:	10 cars
Speed:	65 m. p. h. : 2-3 m. p. h.
Operation:	Timetable, train orders and automatic block-signal system
Track:	Double; tangent; 0.518 percent ascending grade westward
Highway:	Tangent; crosses tracks at angle of 45°; 6 percent ascending grade northward
Weather:	Clear
Time:	About 3:15 p. m.
Casualties:	1 killed; 8 injured
Cause:	Accident caused by motor truck being driven upon highway grade crossing immediately in front of approaching train

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2587

IN THE MATTER OF MAKING ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORTS
UNDER THE ACCIDENT REPORTS ACT OF MAY 6, 1910.

THE ATCHISON, TOPEKA & SANTA FE RAILWAY COMPANY

July 10, 1942.

Accident near Hobart, Calif., on May 13, 1942, caused by motor truck being driven upon highway grade crossing immediately in front of approaching train.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION[1]

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On May 13, 1942, there was a collision between a passenger train and a motor truck on the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway at a highway grade crossing near Hobart, Calif., which resulted in the death of the truck driver, and the injury of one bystander, four passengers and three employees.

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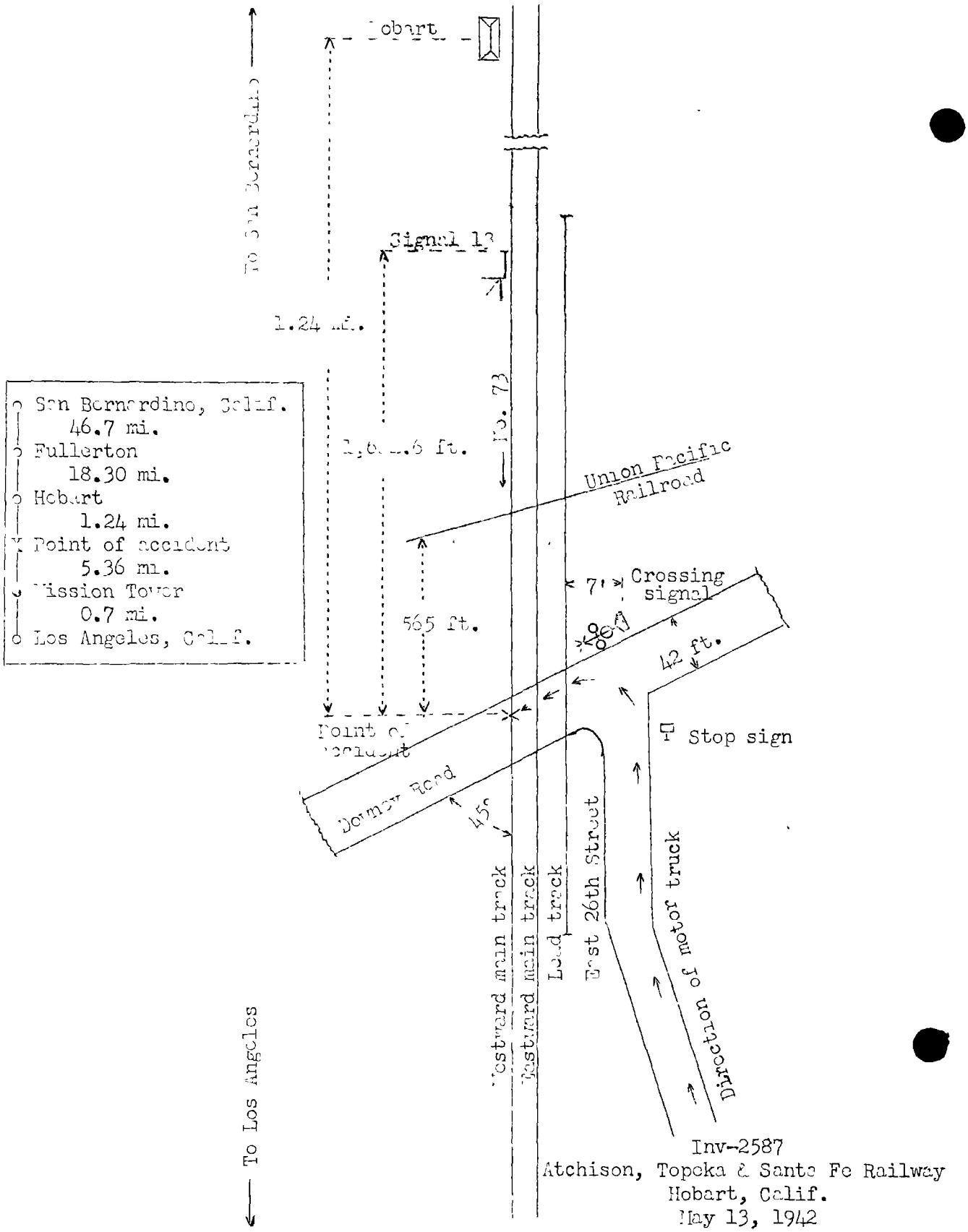
[1]Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Patterson for consideration and disposition.



Inv-2587
Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway
Hobart, Calif.
May 13, 1942

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Los Angeles Division designated as the Third District, which extends between San Bernardino and Los Angeles, Calif., a distance of 72.3 miles. In the immediate vicinity of the point of accident this is a double-track line over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders and an automatic block-signal system. The accident occurred on the westward main track at a point 1.24 miles west of the station at Hobart where the railroad is crossed at grade by Downey Road. At the point of accident a lead track parallels the two main tracks on the south. As the point of accident is approached from the east on the railroad the track is tangent approximately 1 mile to the point of accident and a considerable distance beyond. At the point of accident the grade for west-bound trains is 0.518 percent ascending.

In the immediate vicinity of the point of accident East 26th Street parallels the railroad on the south and at a point about 45 feet south of the grade crossing involved it intersects Downey Road, which crosses the three tracks at an angle of about 45 degrees. As the point of accident is approached from the west on East 26th Street and thence on Downey Road there are, in succession, a tangent 300 feet to Downey Road, a sharp curve to the left, and a tangent 45 feet to the crossing and beyond. From the intersection to the crossing involved the grade for north-bound vehicles is 6 percent ascending. Downey Road is hard surfaced, and south of the crossing it is 42 feet in width. On the crossing, planks 12 inches wide are provided on each side of each rail. The flangeways and the surface of the crossing were fairly well maintained.

The crossing is protected on each side of the tracks by flashing-light signals. The signal governing north-bound traffic on Downey Road is located in the southeast corner of the intersection at a point about 7 feet south of the lead track. On the mast of this signal a cross-buck sign bearing the words "RAILROAD CROSSING" is mounted 8 feet 2 inches above the level of the pavement. A rotating sign, located 6 feet 2 inches above the level of the pavement, displays the word "STOP" toward the south when the signal is actuated. About 2 inches below the rotating sign two red lights, 30 inches apart, are attached to the west side of the mast, and about 12 inches below the sign two red lights, 30 inches apart, are attached to the south side of the mast. The red lights on the west side of the mast display indications for traffic moving eastward on East 26th Street and the red lights on the south side of the mast display indications for traffic moving northward on Downey Road. When the signals on the railroad display proceed for a westward movement on the westward main

track the grade crossing signal involved is actuated when a west-bound train reaches a point 2,570 feet east of the crossing involved. When the grade crossing signal is actuated a bell on the signal rings continuously.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

14. ENGINE WHISTLE SIGNALS.

Note.-The signals prescribed are illustrated by "o" for short sounds; "___" for longer sounds; * * *

Sound	Indication
* * *	
(1) ___ ___ oo	Approaching public crossings at grade, * * * to be prolonged or repeated until passed.

The Vehicle Code of the State of California for 1941 provides in part as follows:

575. Obedience to Signal Indicating Approach of Train. (a) Whenever any person driving a vehicle upon a highway approaches * * * steam railway grade crossing and a clearly visible electric or mechanical signal device gives warning of the immediate approach of a railway train * * *, the driver of such vehicle shall stop within 50 feet but not less than 10 feet from the nearest track of such railway * * *.

* * *

576. Certain Vehicles Must Stop at All Railway Grade Crossings. (a) The driver of any motor vehicle * * * carrying explosive substances or inflammable liquids as a cargo or part of a cargo, before crossing at grade any track or tracks of a steam railway, * * *, shall stop such vehicle not less than 10 nor more than 50 feet from the nearest rail of such track and while so stopped shall listen, and look in both directions along such track, for any approaching train, * * *

* * *

In the vicinity of the point of accident the maximum authorized speed for the train involved is 100 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

First 73, a west-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of Diesel-electric engines 2 and 2-A, 1 baggage car, 1 lounge car, 4 chair cars, 1 dining car, 2 chair cars and 1 chair-observation car, in the order named. All cars were of modern lightweight construction. At San Diego, 120.8 miles east of Hobart, a terminal air-brake test was made. This train departed from Fullerton, 18.3 miles east of Hobart, at 2:56 p. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 18 minutes late, passed Hobart at 3:14 p. m., 16 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 65 miles per hour it collided with a motor truck on a highway grade crossing at a point 1.24 miles west of the station at Hobart. The brakes of First 73 functioned properly en route.

The motor truck involved was a tractor and semitrailer subleased to the Pathfinder Petroleum Corp., Los Angeles. The driver, who was the sole occupant, held California operator's license No. H-137140. The tractor was a 1935 GMC, Model T-46, equipped with a 4-cycle Diesel engine, Model H4, and bore California license P/CE936. Its weight was 12,260 pounds. It was equipped with two rear axles and dual wheels on each axle, Bendix-Westinghouse air brakes and an enclosed steel cab. At the time of the accident it was hauling a steel Utility semitrailer, Model SWXIQ, serial No. 7882. The trailer was equipped with two rear axles and dual wheels on each axle, and an elliptical-shape steel transport tank. The tank was approximately 30 feet long, 5 feet high and 7 feet wide, and had a capacity of 5,667 gallons. The weight of the trailer when empty was 12,800 pounds. The tractor and semitrailer had an overall length of 45 feet. At the time of the accident the tank was loaded with 5,020 gallons of fuel oil, which weighed approximately 39,000 pounds. The vehicle, moving eastward on East 26th Street, en route from Vernon to Alameda, stopped at the intersection of Downey Road, then turned sharply to the left on Downey Road and while moving at an estimated speed of 2 or 3 miles per hour it proceeded upon the tracks where the semitrailer was struck by No. 73.

On Downey Road from the intersection of East 26th Street to the grade crossing involved the driver of a north-bound vehicle has an unobstructed view of a train approaching from the east approximately 1 mile.

The semitrailer was torn from the tractor and was carried in front of First 73 a distance of 880 feet to the point where the train stopped. The semitrailer and tank were demolished. The fuel oil became ignited at the time of the collision and the entire train was damaged by fire. Both Diesel units were badly damaged by fire.

It was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred

about 3:15 p. m.

The employees injured were the fireman and a Diesel engine maintainer.

Data

During the 24-hour period beginning at 12:01 p. m., May 20, 12,735 automobiles, 2,603 trucks, 96 oil transport tank trucks and 123 trains and light engines passed over the crossing.

Discussion

First 73 was approaching the crossing at a speed of 65 miles per hour in territory where the maximum authorized speed was 100 miles per hour. When the engine was at a point about 1,000 feet east of the crossing, the engineer was sounding the whistle signal for the crossing, and he saw the motor truck involved, which he thought was standing immediately south of the crossing. When the engine was about 500 feet from the crossing, the engineer observed that the truck was moving upon the crossing at a speed of 2 or 3 miles per hour. He moved the brake valve to emergency position, but the engine struck the semitrailer. The train stopped with its front end 880 feet beyond the crossing. The tank of the semitrailer was ruptured and its contents of fuel oil became ignited.

The driver involved stopped the motor truck about 50 feet from the crossing in compliance with a stop sign for vehicles proceeding from 28th Street to Downey Road. The truck turned sharply to the left and proceeded upon the crossing without stopping in compliance with the warnings given by the flashing-light signal, the rotating stop signal and the bell, which were located in the southeast corner of the crossing and which were indicating the approach of a train. The Vehicle Code of the state of California requires motor vehicles carrying inflammable liquids as a cargo to stop before they cross a railroad track at grade. The vehicle was carrying a cargo of fuel oil, which became ignited immediately after the collision occurred. Why the driver did not obey the law and the warning signals is not known, as he was killed in the accident. The driver had been employed by the company operating the vehicle involved only 2 days before the accident occurred.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by a motor truck being driven upon a highway grade crossing immediately in front of an approaching train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this tenth day of July, 1942.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.

(SEAL)