

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2668  
THE ATCHISON, TOPEKA & SANTA FE RAILWAY COMPANY  
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT  
AT ONO, CALIF., ON  
JANUARY 25, 1943

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SUMMARY

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Railroad: Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe  
Date: January 25, 1943  
Location: Ono, Calif.  
Kind of accident: Rear-end collision  
Trains involved: Freight : Passenger  
Train numbers: Extra 3937 West : Extra 3761 West  
Engine numbers: 3739-3937-1627 : 3761  
Consist: 51 cars, dead : 14 cars  
engine, caboose  
Speed: 18 m. p. h. : 40 m. p. h.  
Operation: Timetable, train orders and  
automatic block-signal system  
Track: Double; tangent; 1.78 percent  
descending grade westward  
Weather: Raining  
Time: About 11:06 p. m.  
Casualties: 3 killed; 16 injured  
Cause: Accident caused by failure to  
provide adequate safeguards  
for movements in territory  
where automatic block-signal  
system was inoperative

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2668

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

THE ATCHISON, TOPEKA & SANTA FE RAILWAY COMPANY

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April 1, 1943.

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Accident at Ono, Calif., on January 25, 1943, caused by failure to provide adequate safeguards for movements in territory where automatic block-signal system was inoperative.

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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION<sup>1</sup>

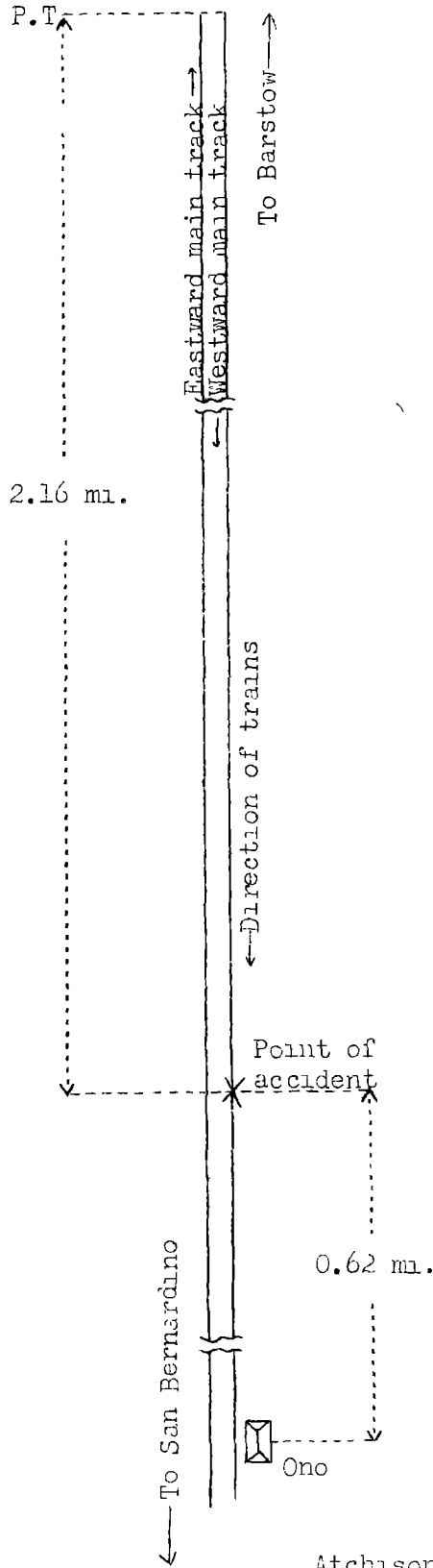
PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On January 25, 1943, there was a rear-end collision between a freight train and a passenger train on the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway at Ono, Calif., which resulted in the death of 1 train-service employee and 2 persons carried under contract, and the injury of 6 passengers, 5 persons carried under contract, 1 dining-car employee, 1 trespasser and 3 train-service employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Railroad Commission of California.

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<sup>1</sup>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.

o	Barstow, Calif.
	55.50 mi.
o	Summit
	6.50 mi.
o	Cajon
	10.90 mi.
o	Verdemont
	1.88 mi.
X	Point of accident
	0.62
o	Ono
	5.40 mi.
o	San Bernardino, Calif.



Inv. No. 2668  
Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Ry.  
Ono, Calif.  
January 25, 1943

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Los Angeles Division designated as the First District and extending between Barstow and San Bernardino, Calif., a distance of 80.8 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a double-track line over which trains moving with the current of traffic are operated by timetable, train orders and an automatic block-signal system. The current of traffic is to the left. At the time of accident, because of storm conditions, the signals were inoperative, and trains were being operated by train orders only. The accident occurred on the westward main track at a point 0.62 mile east of the station at Ono. Approaching from the east the track is tangent 2.16 miles to the point of accident and 1.2 miles beyond. Throughout a distance of 9.48 miles immediately east of the point of accident the grade for west-bound trains varies between 1.42 and 2.22 percent descending to the point of accident and is 1.78 percent at that point.

DEFINITIONS.

\* \* \*

Restricted Speed.--Proceed prepared to stop short of train, obstruction, or anything that may require the speed of a train to be reduced.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

11. A train finding a fusee burning on or near its track must stop and wait until it has burned out, before proceeding.

35. Fusees, which will burn for five minutes with a red flame, are to be used in addition to other signals for protecting trains. They may be dropped from a moving train as a signal against a train following, \* \* \*.

99. \* \* \*

When a train is moving under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must take such action as may be necessary to insure full protection. By night, \* \* \*, lighted fusees must be thrown off at proper intervals.

\* \* \*

761. A train must not be admitted to a block which is occupied by a passenger train, and a passenger train must not be admitted to a block which is occupied by any train, \* \* \*

A passenger train must not accept a restricted speed block signal indication.

830. When a train is stopped by a stop and proceed signal it may:

\* \* \*

(b) On two or more tracks proceed at once at restricted speed.

In the immediate vicinity of the point of accident the maximum authorized speed for freight trains is 20 miles per hour, for light engines 30 miles per hour, and for passenger trains 51.4 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

Extra 3937 West, a west-bound freight train, consisted of engines 3789 and 3937, 5 cars, dead engine 3520, 5 cars, engine 1627, 41 cars and a caboose, in the order named. At Barstow, 75.4 miles east of Ono, the crew received copies of train order No. 203, reading as follows:

All regular trains due to leave San Bernardino and Barstow January 24 are annulled between Barstow and San Bernardino

The train departed from Barstow at 11:15 a. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains. At Cajon, 13.4 miles east of Ono and the last open office, the crew received copies of train order No. 11, reading as follows:

Automatic signals on both tracks between Ono and Cajon are out of service - Rule 830-B is suspended. Trains will not respect indications given by these signals.

The train departed from Cajon at 9:40 p. m., and while moving at an estimated speed of 18 miles per hour it was struck by Extra 3761 West, a passenger train, at a point 0.62 mile east of Ono.

Under normal conditions, this passenger train would have been operated on the schedule of No. 23, a first-class schedule, but on this date it was being operated from Barstow to San Bernardino as Extra 3761 West. It consisted of engine 3761, 2 Pullman tourist cars, 7 chair cars, 1 dining car, 1 lounge car, 1 Pullman tourist car, 1 Pullman sleeping car and 1 Pullman tourist car, in the order named. All cars were of steel construction. After its crew received copies of train order No. 203, it departed from Barstow at 8:15 p. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains. At Summit, 19.9 miles east of Ono, the crew received copies of train order No. 11. This train departed from Summit at 9:58 p. m., from Cajon at 10:36 p. m., and while moving at a speed of 40 miles per hour, as indicated by the tape of the speed recorder with which the engine was equipped, it collided with Extra 3937 West. The brakes of Extra 3761 West had been tested and had functioned properly at all points where used en route. There was no

condition of the engine that distracted the attention of the enginemen or obscured their vision.

The caboose of Extra 3937 West was demolished. The first five cars ahead of the caboose were derailed and stopped, badly damaged, in various positions across both tracks. Engine 3761 entered a facing-point crossover and stopped upright and in line with the crossover with the front end of the engine 700 feet west of the point of collision. The front end was badly damaged. The first two cars of Extra 3761 were derailed and slightly damaged.

It was raining at the time of the accident, which occurred about 11:06 p. m.

The train-service employee killed was the flagman of Extra 3937. The train-service employees injured were the conductor of Extra 3937 and the engineer and the fireman of Extra 3761.

#### Discussion

In the vicinity of the accident trains moving with the current of traffic normally are operated by timetable, train orders and an automatic block-signal system. However, the automatic block signals were inoperative in certain localities because of flood conditions having prevailed several days before the accident occurred, and, at midnight, January 22, the power plant furnishing power for the automatic signals in this section failed. At the time of the accident the signals between Cajon and Ono, 13.4 miles, within which territory the accident occurred, had not been restored to service. Regular trains between Barstow and San Bernardino had been annulled, and all trains were being operated as extras. Several sidings were blocked with cars and yards were congested.

Because of the congested condition of the yard at San Bernardino, the crew of Extra 3937 received instructions to clear their train on the siding at Devore, and to call the dispatcher. While it was on the siding at Devore two west-bound passenger trains, operating as extras, passed. The conductor called the dispatcher and was instructed to proceed to San Bernardino after the passage of the two passenger trains. No operator was on duty at Devore. While moving at a speed of about 18 miles per hour it was struck by Extra 3761 at a point 0.62 mile east of Ono.

As Extra 3761 was approaching Ono the headlight was lighted, the throttle was in drifting position and the speed was 46 miles per hour, as indicated by the tape of the speed recorder. Both enginemen and a road foreman of engines were maintaining a look-out ahead, and there was no condition of the engine that distracted their attention or obscured their vision. Because of rain and mist, visibility was considerably restricted. The first that anyone on the engine was aware of a preceding train was when the lighted markers of Extra 3937 were observed about 900 feet distant. The engineer immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position and closed the throttle, but the distance was not sufficient to stop short of Extra 3937. The speed was about 40 miles per hour at the time of the collision. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly en route.

The maximum authorized speeds for Extra 3937 and Extra 3761 were, respectively, 20 and 51.4 miles per hour, and accordingly Extra 3937, the preceding train, could be overtaken by Extra 3761, as no train order restricting the movement of the latter had been issued. The engineer of Extra 3761 and the road foreman of engines said that no lighted fusee was encountered throughout a distance of about 12 miles immediately east of the point of accident. As Extra 3937 was approaching Ono the flagman was in the cupola and the conductor was engaged in clerical duties. The conductor had instructed the flagman to station himself in the cupola to observe the train as it moved on the descending grade. About 1-1/2 miles east of Ono, the conductor was on the rear platform, and he saw no indication of a following train. The first that he was aware of a following train was when the collision occurred. The swing brakeman, who was on the twentieth car ahead of the caboose, saw the headlight of the following train about 1 minute before the accident occurred. As the flagman had been instructed to remain in the cupola, the conductor was required to provide necessary flag protection. He so understood but did not drop any lighted fusees because he saw no following train and had no information that a passenger train was following his train.

Both trains were being operated as extras and therefore had equal authority. However, under the orders which had been issued, the carrier's rule requiring trains moving in territory where automatic block signals are inoperative to proceed prepared to stop short of a train or obstruction was suspended. Although the maximum authorized speed of the following train was 31.4 miles per hour higher than that of the preceding train, protection depended entirely upon flagging. If this rule had not been suspended, the following train would have been required to move at restricted speed, or in such manner that it would not strike the preceding train.

The carrier's book of operating rules contains manual-block rules providing an absolute block system under which no passenger train is permitted to enter a block occupied by any train, except in case of emergency. If the manual-block system had been placed in effect to protect traffic during the period that the automatic block-signal system was inoperative, this accident could have been prevented. The carrier made no provision for using the manual-block system when the automatic block-signal system was inoperative.

#### Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to provide adequate safeguards for movements in territory where automatic block-signal system was inoperative.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this first day of April, 1943.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,  
Secretary.