

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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REPORT NO. 3539  
THE BALTIMORE AND OHIO RAILROAD COMPANY  
IN RE ACCIDENT  
AT CASNER, ILL., ON  
OCTOBER 15, 1953

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SUMMARY

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Date: October 15, 1953

Railroad: Baltimore and Ohio

Location: Casner, Ill.

Kind of accident: Rear-end collision

Trains involved: Freight . Freight

Train numbers: 84 . Work Extra 915

Engine numbers: Diesel-electric unit 922 Diesel-electric unit 915

Consists: Caboose, 20 cars, : 15 cars, caboose  
caboose

Estimated speeds: Standing . 10 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and train orders

Track: Single; tangent, level

Weather: Clear

Time: 9 10 p. m.

Casualties: 1 killed

Cause: Failure to operate following train in  
accordance with flagman's signals

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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REPORT NO. 3539

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

THE BALTIMORE AND OHIO RAILROAD COMPANY

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November 25, 1953

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Accident at Casner, Ill., on October 15, 1953, caused by  
failure to operate the following train in accordance  
with flagman's signals.

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

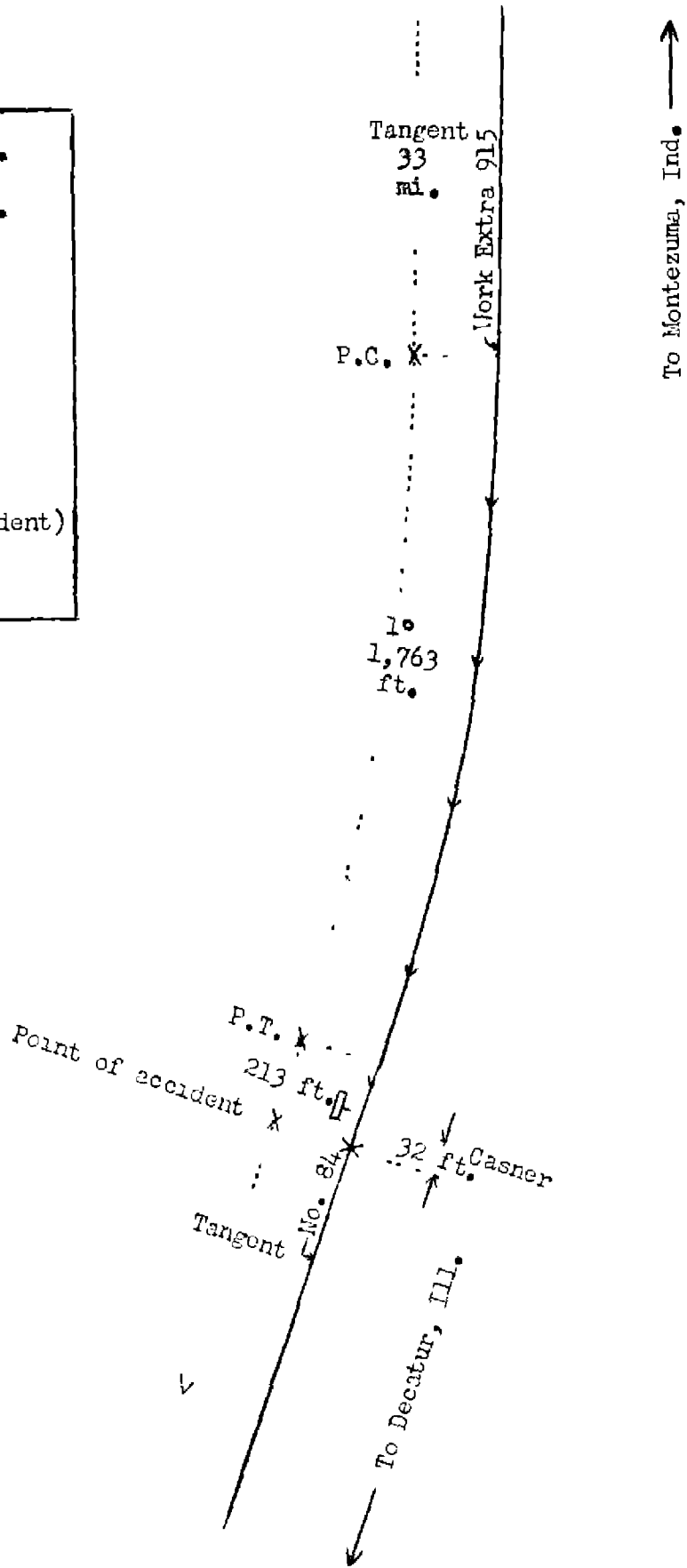
CLARKE, Commissioner

On October 15, 1953, there was a rear-end collision  
between two freight trains on the Baltimore and Ohio Rail-  
road at Casner, Ill., which resulted in the death of one  
train-service employee.

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<sup>1</sup>  
Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Com-  
merce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the  
Commission to Commissioner Clarke for consideration and  
disposition.

•	Montezuma, Ind.
	49.7 mi.
•	T.Y. Tower, Ill.
	9.1 mi.
•	Atwood
	3.5 mi.
•	Pierson
	3.4 mi.
•	Hammond
	6.6 mi.
•	La Place
	4.0 mi.
•	Casner
	(Point of accident)
	9.1 mi.
•	Decatur, Ill.



Report No. 3539  
 Baltimore and Ohio Railroad  
 Casner, Ill.  
 October 15, 1953

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Indianapolis Division extending between Montezuma, Ind., and Decatur, Ill., 85.4 miles. This is a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. The accident occurred on the main track at a point 76.3 miles west of Montezuma and 32 feet west of the station sign at Casner, Ill. From the east there are, in succession, a tangent 33 miles in length, a 1° curve to the right 1,763 feet, and a tangent 213 feet to the point of accident and a considerable distance westward. From the east the grade is 0.63 percent descending a distance of 2,244 feet, 0.33 percent descending 528 feet, 0.07 percent ascending 528 feet, and level 142 feet to the point of accident and 386 feet westward.

This carrier's operating rules read in part as follows:

DEFINITIONS

SPEEDS

\* \* \*

Restricted Speed--Proceed, prepared to stop short of train \* \* \*

11 (A). The following signals must be used by flagmen:

Night Signals--

A red light,  
A white light,  
Torpedoes and fusees.

\* \* \*

Torpedoes

31. The explosion of torpedoes is a signal to be on the alert for flagman, obstruction or train ahead. \* \* \*

\* \* \*

Fusees.

32. A train finding a fusee burning on or near its track must stop and extinguish the fusee. It may then proceed at restricted speed.

\* \* \*

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

When a train stops under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must go back immediately with flagman's signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection, placing two torpedoes on the rail, and when necessary, displaying lighted fusee in addition.

\* \* \*

The maximum authorized speed for freight trains is 40 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

No. 84, a west-bound third-class freight train, consisted of Diesel-electric unit 922, a caboose, 20 cars, and a caboose, in the order named. This train departed from Montezuma at 9 57 a. m., 1 hour 27 minutes late, departed from TY Tower, 26.6 miles east of Casner, the last open office, at 6.44 p. m., 6 hours 24 minutes late, and stopped at Casner at 9 05 p. m. About 9:10 p. m., while switching operations were being performed at the front end of the train, the rear end was struck by Work Extra 915.

Work Extra 915, a west-bound freight train, consisted of Diesel-electric unit 915, headed east and moving in backward motion, 15 cars, and a caboose. This train departed from TY Tower at 8 09 p. m., and while moving at an estimated speed of 10 miles per hour it struck the rear end of No. 84.

The superstructure of the Diesel-electric unit of Work Extra 915 was demolished. The caboose, the twentieth car, and the rear wheels of the nineteenth car of No. 84 were derailed. The twentieth car stopped on its right side, north of and against the Diesel-electric unit of Work Extra 915. The caboose stopped on its right side, north of and against the twentieth car. The twentieth car and the caboose were badly damaged, and the nineteenth car was slightly damaged. None of the equipment of Work Extra 915 was derailed.

The engineer of Work Extra 915 was killed.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 9 10 p. m.

#### Discussion

No. 84 stopped at Atwood, Pierson, Hammond, and LaPlace, 17.5 miles, 14 miles, 10.6 miles, and 4 miles, respectively, east of Casner. The flagman placed two torpedoes on the rail before the train departed from each of these stations. As No. 84 was approaching the point where the accident occurred, the conductor and the front brakeman were in the caboose at the front of the train, and the flagman was in the caboose at the rear. The two markers on the caboose at the rear were lighted and each displayed a red light to the rear. The flagman had observed the reflection of the headlight of Work Extra 915 at various locations en route, and was aware that Work Extra 915 was following No. 84 closely. He said that after No. 84 departed from LaPlace, he lighted a 5-minute red fusee and placed it on the rear platform of the caboose. When the fusee burned out he lighted three 5-minute red fusees, in succession, and threw them to the track. The first fusee was located approximately 1,500 feet east of the east end of the curve immediately east of Casner. The east end of the curve was 1,976 feet east of the point of accident. He said the second fusee was located a short distance east of the east end of the curve, and the third fusee was located a short distance west of the east end of the curve. Before the train stopped at Casner he alighted from the caboose and proceeded eastward to provide flag protection. His flagging equipment consisted of a white lantern, torpedoes, and 5-minute red fusees. He placed two torpedoes on the rail when he reached a point approximately 360 feet east of the caboose. He said that when he reached a point about 500 feet east of the caboose he observed the headlight of Work Extra 915.

He immediately gave stop signals with a lighted red fusee. He said he thought that the engineer of Work Extra 915 answered his signals by sounding the prescribed whistle signal on the pneumatic horn. The fusee near the east end of the curve was burning at that time and Work Extra 915 passed over it while it was still burning. He thought the brakes of Work Extra 915 became applied about the time the train passed him.

As Work Extra 915 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 35 miles per hour. The enginemen and the front brakeman were maintaining a lookout ahead from the control compartment of the Diesel-electric unit. The conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. The headlight was lighted brightly. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. The fireman and the front brakeman said that Work Extra 915 exploded torpedoes at Atwood, Pierson, Hammond, and LaPlace. The brakeman said that the engineer acknowledged the explosion of the torpedoes by sounding the prescribed signal on the pneumatic horn. The fireman and the brakeman said that as the train approached the curve east of the point of accident they observed a fusee on the track. They said that the engineer made a brake-pipe reduction as the train approached the fusee, but the fusee burned out before the train reached it and the engineer took no further action to stop the train. The brakeman thought this fusee was located about 1,500 feet east of the east end of the curve. When the train reached a point in the immediate vicinity of the east end of the curve, the employees on the locomotive observed a second fusee, which was located about 1,300 feet east of the point where the accident occurred. In this vicinity trees and foliage north of the track restrict an engine crew's view of the track ahead and the fireman and the brakeman thought that this fusee became visible to them at a distance of about 550 feet. They said that when the fusee became visible the engineer made a brake-pipe reduction and then immediately made an emergency application of the brakes. The fireman did not see the flagman of No. 84, who was on the south side of the track. The front brakeman said that the brakes were applied in emergency before the train reached a point from which the flagman was visible. The conductor said that there was a brake application as the train approached Casner. He proceeded to the rear platform of the caboose. Soon afterward he observed the markers on the caboose of No. 84 about 900 feet west of the front end of his train. He immediately opened the conductor's valve on the caboose. He could not fix the exact point at which an emergency brake application



became effective, but he said that the absence of an exhaust from the valve indicated that an emergency application was made before he opened the valve. The speed of the train had been reduced to about 10 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

A representative of the mechanical department inspected the equipment of Work Extra 915 about 6 hours after the accident occurred. The brakes on all of the cars except two were still applied at that time. The brake-cylinder pipe on the Diesel-electric unit had been damaged in the collision, and the brakes on the unit were released. All wheels of the unit bore slid-flat spots ranging from 1 inch to 1-3/4 inches in length. The piston travel on one of the cars was found to be excessive. All of the cars and the caboose were equipped with AB brakes.

The rules of the carrier require that when the crew of a train finds a fusee burning on or near its track, the train must be stopped and the fusee extinguished, then the train may proceed, but it must be prepared to stop short of a train ahead. Work Extra 915 passed over a burning fusee located about 1,300 feet east of the point where the accident occurred and, without stopping, continued its movement to the point of collision.

Cause

This accident was caused by failure to operate the following train in accordance with flagman's signals.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-fifth day of November, 1953.

By the Commission, Commissioner Clarke.

(SEAL)

GEORGE W. LAIRD,  
Secretary.