

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

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REPORT NO. 3333

THE BALTIMORE AND OHIO RAILROAD COMPANY

IN RE ACCIDENT

NEAR WEST FARMINGTON, OHIO, ON

MAY 25, 1950

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SUMMARY

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Date: May 25, 1950

Railroad: Baltimore and Ohio

Location: West Farmington, Ohio

Kind of accident: Head-end collision

Equipment involved: Freight train : Engine

Train number: Second 90 :

Engine numbers: 7159 : 7206

Consist: 80 cars, caboose :

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

Operation: Timetable and train orders, and  
manual-block system for trains  
following passenger trains

Track: Single; tangent; 0.15 percent  
descending grade eastward

Weather: Cloudy

Time: 3:15 a. m.

Casualties: 1 killed; 2 injured

Cause: Open switch

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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REPORT NO. 3333

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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July 24, 1950

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Accident near West Farmington, Ohio, on May 25, 1950,  
caused by an open switch.

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

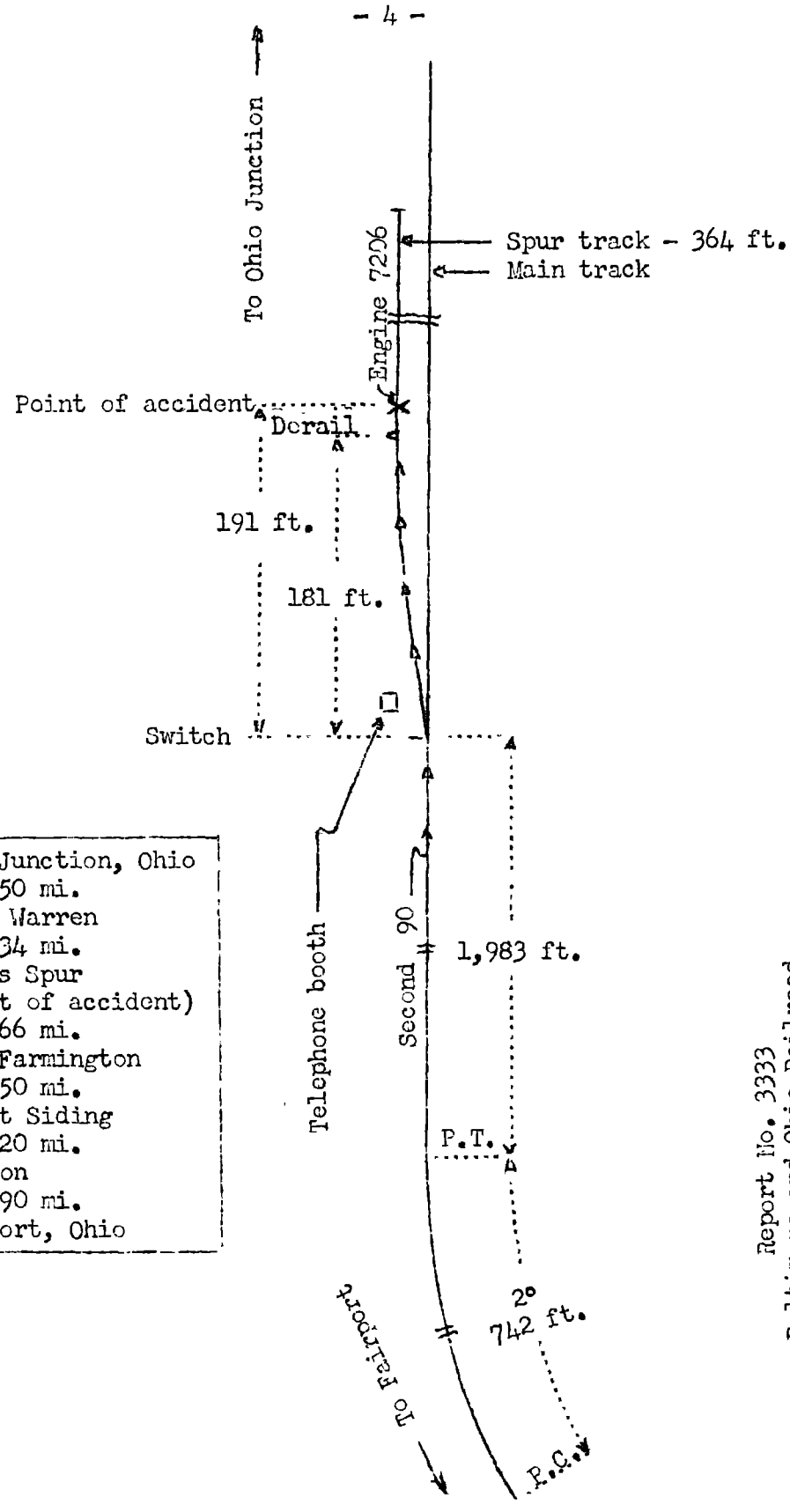
PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On May 25, 1950, there was a head-end collision between a freight train and an engine on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad near West Farmington, Ohio, which resulted in the death of one employee, and the injury of two employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio.

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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 Ohio Junction, Ohio
- | 11.50 mi.
- o North Warren
- | 11.34 mi.
- X Failes Spur
- | (Point of accident)
- | 1.66 mi.
- o West Farmington
- | 6.50 mi.
- o Summit Siding
- | 14.20 mi.
- o Chardon
- | 13.90 mi.
- o Fairport, Ohio



Report No. 3333  
 Baltimore and Ohio Railroad  
 West Farmington, Ohio  
 May 25, 1950

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Akron Division extending between Fairport and Ohio Junction, Ohio, 59.1 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders, and a manual-block system for trains following passenger trains. At Failes Sour, 36.26 miles east of Fairport and 1.66 miles east of West Farmington, a spur track 364 feet in length parallels the main track on the north. The switch is facing-point for east-bound trains. The accident occurred on the spur track at a point 191 feet east of the switch. From the west on the main track there is a 2° curve to the right 742 feet in length, and then a tangent 1,983 feet to the spur-track switch and a considerable distance eastward. The grade is 0.15 percent descending eastward at the point of accident.

Entry to the spur track is made through a No. 10 turnout. The switch stand is of the ground-throw, intermediate-stand type, and is located 9 feet 3 inches north of the center-line of the main track. When the switch is in normal position, a green banner 9 inches wide and 30 inches long is displayed at right angles to the track. This banner is pointed at each end and is attached to the spindle in a diagonal position and 7 feet above the tops of the ties. When the switch is lined for entry to the spur track, a red banner 14 inches wide and 30 inches long is displayed at right angles to the track. This banner is rounded at each end and is attached to the spindle in a horizontal position at the same level as the green banner. Each banner is equipped with a reflector lens 3 inches in diameter and of the same color as the banner. The switch stand is not equipped with a switch lamp. A padlock is provided for locking the latch of a keeper when the operating lever is in normal position, and a metal hook is provided for securing the latch of another keeper when the switch is lined for entry to the spur track.

A hand-operated derail is located on the north rail of the spur track at a point 181 feet east of the switch. The derail is not equipped with a target or a switch lamp.

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

104. Switches and derails must be left properly lined after having been used. \* \* \* When practicable, the engineer must see that the switches and derails nearest the engine are properly lined.

When a train backs into a siding \* \* \* at hand operated switches, the engineer must see that the main track switches and derails are closed.

\* \* \*

After a train enters a siding, \* \* \* the pull-in switch and derail \* \* \* must be secured in the normal position until the approaching train has passed.

\* \* \* After using a switch and derail, the person handling it must see that it is securely locked and must see that the switch points are in proper position.

When a train or engine is waiting to cross from one track to another and during the approach or passage of a train on tracks involved, all switches and derails connected with the movement must be secured in the normal position. \* \* \* Where trains are required to be reported in the clear at sidings with hand-operated switches, this report must not be made \* \* \* until the switch and derail has been properly lined and secured in their normal position.

\* \* \*

The maximum authorized speed for the freight train was 30 miles per hour.

#### Description of Accident

Engine 7206, headed westward, entered the spur track at Failes Spur at 12:55 a. m. and stopped with the west end of the engine 191 feet east of the switch. About 2 hours 20 minutes later it was struck by Second 90.

Second 90, an east-bound third-class freight train, consisted of engine 7159, 80 cars and a caboose. This train passed Summit Siding, the last open office, 8.16 miles west of Failes Spur, at 2:53 a. m., 7 hours 23 minutes late, entered the spur track at Failes Spur, and while moving at an estimated speed of 10 miles per hour it struck engine 7206.

Engine 7206 was moved eastward a distance of 174 feet. Both the engine and the tender were derailed and stopped upright, east of the east end of the spur track and in line with the main track. They were badly damaged. The engine

truck and the front pair of driving wheels of the engine of Second 90 were derailed to the south. The engine was considerably damaged. The first four cars and the front truck of the fifth car were derailed to the north. The second and third cars were badly damaged, and the other derailed cars were slightly damaged.

The engineer of engine 7206 was killed, and the engineer of Second 90 and the flagman of engine 7206 were injured.

The weather was cloudy at the time of the accident, which occurred about 3:15 a. m.

#### Discussion

Engine 7206, headed westward and in backward motion, passed Summit Siding at 12:23 a. m., and arrived at Failes Spur about 12:55 a. m. The crew of this engine had received instructions that the engine was to help Extra 7307 West, a west-bound freight train, from Failes Spur to Chardon, 22.36 miles. When the engine stopped at the spur-track switch, the flagman unlocked the switch and lined it for entry to the spur track. He said that after the engine entered the spur track he restored the switch to normal position and hooked the padlock in the latch of the keeper but did not lock the padlock. He then went to a telephone booth near the switch and communicated with the train dispatcher, and then entered the cab of the engine. About 30 minutes later he again went to the telephone and was informed by the train dispatcher that Extra 7307 West would meet Second 90 at North Warren, 11.34 miles east of Failes Spur. The engineer and the fireman remained on the engine after it entered the spur track, and, after the flagman returned from the telephone the second time, none of these employees left the cab of the engine until immediately before the collision occurred. As Second 90 was closely approaching the spur-track switch, the switch points were illuminated by the headlight, and the fireman of engine 7206 observed that the switch was lined for entry to the spur track. He called a warning to the other employees on the engine, but did not have sufficient time to reach the switch or to give stop signals before Second 90 entered the spur track.

As Second 90 was approaching the point where the accident occurred, the speed was about 20 miles per hour. The engineer and the front brakeman were maintaining a lookout ahead from

their positions in the cab of the engine, the fireman was on the deck of the engine tending the fire, and 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. When the engine was about 1,200 feet west of the spur-track switch, the engineer and the front brakeman observed the classification lights of engine 7206. The engineer said that when the engine was about 550 feet west of the switch, he thought he observed the red reflector of the switch target. He immediately closed the throttle and crossed to the left side of the cab to confirm his first observation. When he saw that the switch was lined for entry to the spur track, he initiated an emergency brake application. The engine then was about 275 feet west of the switch. The speed of the train was reduced to about 10 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

After the accident occurred, the spur-track switch was found to be lined for entry to the spur track. The operating lever was latched in that position, but the latch of the keeper was not secured by the hook which was provided for that purpose. The padlock was hooked in the latch of the keeper which secures the operating lever in normal position, but it was not locked. The derail on the spur track was in non-derailing position, and it bore no mark which indicated that it had been in derailing position when Second 90 entered the track. The flagman of engine 7206, who so far as known was the last person in the vicinity of the switch prior to the time of the accident, said that the derail was in non-derailing position when engine 7206 arrived at the switch. He could not remember whether he placed the derail in derailing position after the engine entered the spur track, but he said he was positive that he restored the switch to normal position. He said that when he lined the switch for entry to the spur track he did not secure the latch of the keeper by use of the hook, but when he restored the switch to normal position he hooked the padlock in the latch. Because he expected to use the switch again in a short time, he did not lock the padlock. He also said he observed that the switch was properly lined in normal position when he returned from the telephone the second time.

The headlight of engine 7206 was extinguished after the engine entered the spur track, and, because the reflector lenses of the switch target require illumination from an exterior source to display night aspects, the position of the



switch could not be determined by employees on the engine. After the accident occurred, tests were made to determine the distance at which the night aspects of the switch target were visible from an engine approaching from the west. An engine of the same type as the engine of Second 90 was used in making these tests. It was found that when the headlight of the engine was lighted brightly the green and the red reflector lenses were visible at distances of 923 feet and 567 feet, respectively. An oil burning switch lamp then was placed on the switch stand. It was found that both the green and the red aspects were visible at distances of more than 2,300 feet.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by an open switch.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-fourth day of July, 1950

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,  
Secretary.