

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3488
BANGOR AND AROOSTOOK RAILROAD COMPANY
IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR SOLDIER POND, MAINE, ON
OCTOBER 20, 1952

SUMMARY

Date: October 20, 1952

Railroad: Bangor and Aroostook

Location: Soldier Pond, Maine

Kind of accident: Head-end collision

Equipment involved: Track motor-car and : Freight train
two trailers

Train numbers: : Extra 568
North

Engine number: : 568

Consist: : 11 cars, 2
caboose

Estimated speeds: 5 m. p. h. : 40 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and train orders

Track: Single; 4° curve; 0.32 percent
descending grade southward

Weather: Cloudy

Time: 1:10 p. m.

Casualties: 4 killed; 3 injured

Cause: Failure to provide adequate protection
for movement of track motor-car

Recommendation: That the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad
Company provide adequate protection
for the movement of track motor-cars
on its line

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3488

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

BANGOR AND ARCOSTOOK RAILROAD COMPANY

November 24, 1952

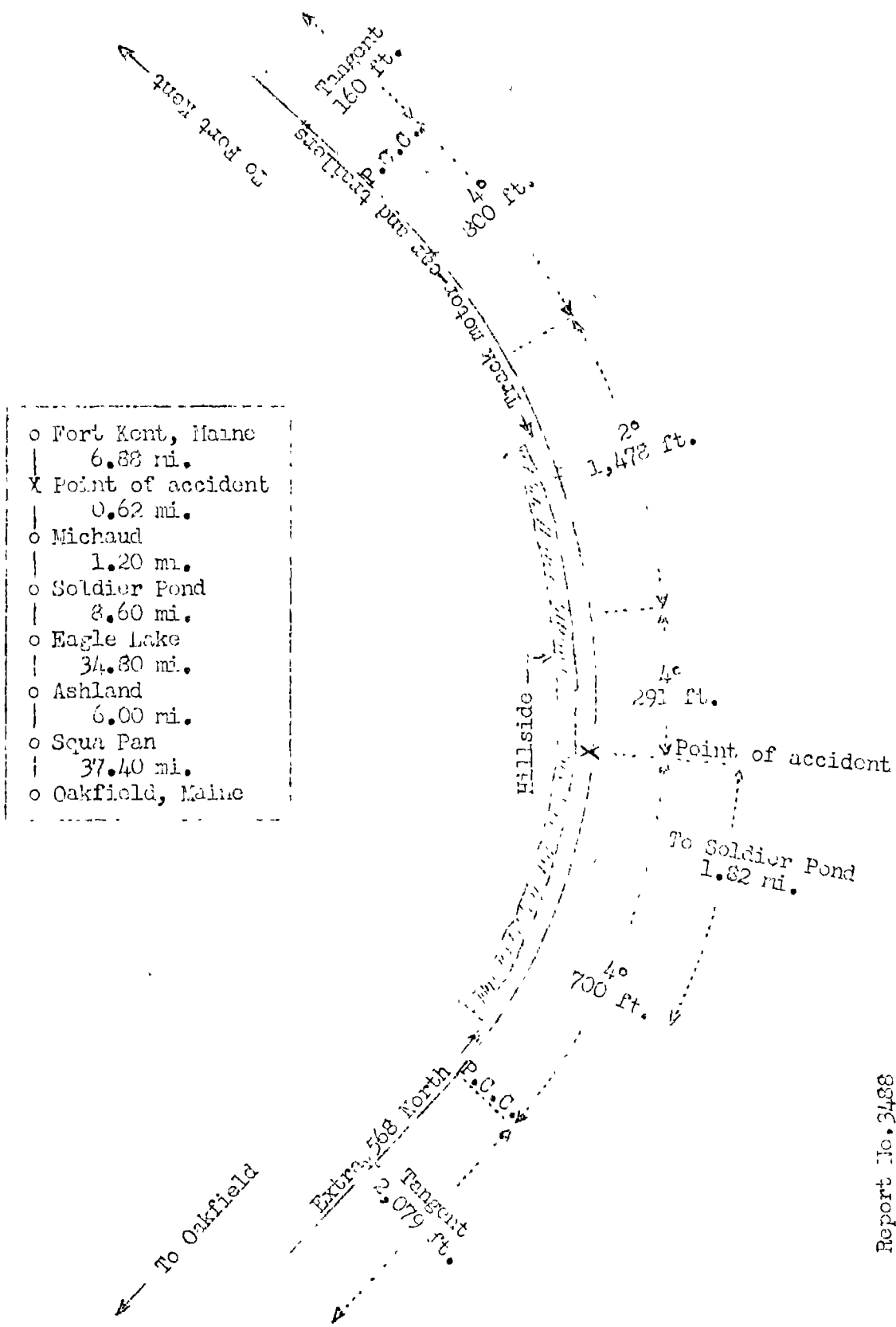
Accident near Soldier Pond, Maine, on October 20, 1952,
caused by failure to provide adequate protection for
the movement of a track motor-car.

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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On October 20, 1952, there was a head-end collision between a track motor-car and a freight train on the Bangor and Arcostook Railroad near Soldier Pond, Maine, which resulted in the death of four maintenance-of-way employees, and the injury of three maintenance-of-way employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Maine Public Utilities Commission.

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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.



Report No. 3488
 Bangor and Brocton Railroad
 Soldier Pond, Maine
 October 20, 1952

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Northern Division extending between Fort Kent and Oakfield, Maine, 95.5 miles, 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 6.82 miles south of Fort Kent and 1.82 miles north of Soldier Pond. From the north there are, in succession, a tangent 160 feet in length, a compound curve to the right, which has a curvature of 4° for 800 feet, 2° for 1,479 feet, and 4° for 291 feet to the point of accident and 700 feet southward. From the south there are, in succession, a tangent 2,079 feet in length and the curve on which the accident occurred. In the immediate vicinity of the point of accident a hillside west of the track materially restricts the range of vision between opposing movements. The grade is 0.32 percent descending southward at the point of accident.

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

31. * * *

* * *

All trains, except the first section of regularly scheduled passenger trains, will sound two long blasts of the whistle approaching all blind curves or groups of curves from 3:00 am to 6:00 pm * * *

* * *

Rules governing the operation of track motor-cars read in part as follows:

7. Whenever possible, foremen should get a line-up of trains on the road before starting out with track car but must bear in mind that extra trains may be run at any time and be prepared for them at all times. * * * The fact that a line-up of trains has been obtained does not relieve the foreman from responsibility of looking for trains. The man in charge of the car must * * * operate the car at all times prepared to find the main track obstructed or in use.

21. At curves and under conditions where motor-cars cannot be operated safely they must be protected by flags. Never take it for granted that the track is clear.

Bulletin special instructions read in part as follows:

* * *

In securing line-ups of train movements the Motorcar Operator will not ask the Station Agent or Telegrapher concerning any particular train movement but instead will advise as to the territory over which he is to operate the motor car and request a line-up. This information will then be secured by the Station Agent or telegrapher from the Dispatcher: and furnished to the Motorcar Operator on Form Number 226 entitled "BROADCAST OF TRAINS" which will be made out in duplicate. The Agent or Telegrapher will retain the copy. * * *

* * *

Bulletin special instructions to agents and operators read in part as follows:

Whenever any inquiry is made of you concerning whereabouts of trains, and you call the Dispatcher for this information, tell the Dispatcher in every instance who it is that is making the inquiry, also advise him where the party is going.

The maximum authorized speed is 40 miles per hour for freight trains and 10 miles per hour for track motor-cars with trailers.

Description of Accident

About 12:40 p. m. a track motor-car with two trailers departed south-bound from Fort Kent. The track motor-car was occupied by a maintenance-of-way foreman and six employees, and the second trailer was occupied by 19 maintenance-of-way employees. At 1:10 p. m., while moving at a speed of about 5 miles per hour, it collided with Extra 568 North at a point 6.88 miles south of Fort Kent and 1.82 miles north of Soldier Pond.

Extra 568 North, a north-bound freight train, consisted of Diesel-electric unit 568, 11 cars, and 2 cabooses. The Diesel-electric unit was of the road-switcher type. This train departed from Soldier Pond at 1:05 p. m., and while it was moving at a speed of about 40 miles per hour it collided with the track motor-car and trailers.

The track motor-car and the trailers were demolished. Extra 568 North stopped with the front of the locomotive 750 feet north of the point of accident. The front of the locomotive was slightly damaged.

Four occupants of the trailer were killed, and three occupants of the trailer were injured.

The weather was cloudy at the time of the accident, which occurred at 1:10 p. m.

The track motor-car was of the 4-wheel type. It was powered by a 4-cylinder 31-horsepower gasoline motor and was equipped with 4-wheel brakes. It weighed 1,800 pounds and had seating capacity for eight persons. The first trailer had a flat wooden deck, and the second trailer was equipped with a seat and safety railings and had seating capacity for 20 persons.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 4.1 trains.

Discussion

On the day of the accident a maintenance-of-way force reported for duty at Fort Kent at 6 a. m. This force was assigned to perform track work at Michaud, 7.5 miles south of Fort Kent. Snow was falling, and the foreman decided to remain at Fort Kent until the storm subsided. About 8 a. m. he proceeded to the station, told the operator that he was going to Michaud later in the day, and asked the operator for information regarding train movements between Fort Kent and Michaud. The operator had received a line-up from the train dispatcher at 7 a. m., but he had not made a copy of the line-up for the foreman. He informed the foreman that No. 21, a north-bound passenger train, which was due to arrive at Fort Kent at 11:05 a. m., would be about on time, and that Extra 568 South, a local freight train, which had departed from Fort Kent at 7:45 a. m., would turn at Squa Pan,

58.1 miles south of Fort Kent, and return to Fort Kent. A short time later the foreman decided that he and his force would proceed to Michaud on their track motor-car. Because the operator had told him that No. 21 would be the only train in that territory until afternoon, he did not consider a written line-up necessary and he did not request one. The maintenance-of-way force departed from Fort Kent at 9:15 a. m. and returned to Fort Kent for lunch at 11:45 a. m. The foreman then proceeded to the station to procure a line-up to be used during the afternoon. Soon after 11 a. m. the operator received a line-up, which contained the information that Extra 568 South was in the vicinity of Ashland, 52.1 miles south of Fort Kent, and would turn at Squa Pan and return to Fort Kent. He also received several messages for the foreman and instructions to notify the foreman to call another employee on the telephone. The foreman was unable to reach the other employee by telephone immediately, and he did not leave the station until about 12:05 p. m. Before he left, he asked the operator when Extra 568 North would leave Eagle Lake, 17.3 miles south of Fort Kent. The operator asked the train dispatcher for this information. The train dispatcher replied that he thought the train would leave Eagle Lake about 1 p. m. but that this time might not be accurate. During the conversation between the maintenance-of-way foreman and the operator, the foreman gained the impression that the train would not leave Eagle Lake earlier than 1 p. m. When the foreman left the station he neglected to take a copy of the line-up. The maintenance-of-way force departed from Fort Kent with the track motor-car and two trailers about 12:40 p. m. The foreman assumed that because Extra 568 North would consume not less than 20 minutes in running from Eagle Lake to Michaud, it would not pass Michaud earlier than 1:20 p. m. As the track motor-car was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was between 10 and 15 miles per hour. The foreman, the motor-car operator, and several other employees were maintaining a lookout ahead. Because of the hillside west of the track, the headlight of Extra 568 North did not become visible to the occupants of the track motor-car until the movements were about 600 feet apart, and the entire front of the locomotive did not become visible until the movements were about 430 feet apart. The motor-car operator applied the brakes and called a warning to the other employees immediately after the headlight became visible to him. The collision occurred before the track motor-car could be stopped. The foreman and the motor-car operator said they did not hear the pneumatic horn of Extra 568 North before the accident occurred.

Extra 568 North departed from Squa Pan at 11:25 a. m., passed Eagle Lake at 12:35 p. m., and departed from Soldier Pond at 1:05 p. m. As this train was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was 41 miles per hour, as indicated by the tape of the speed recording device. The enginemen and the front brakeman were maintaining a lookout ahead from their positions in the control compartment of the locomotive. The conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. The brakes of the train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. The headlight was lighted. The members of the crew had received no information that the track ahead was occupied by the track motor-car. The engineer sounded the prescribed whistle signal on the pneumatic horn as the train approached the curve on which the accident occurred. The front brakeman said that the track motor-car became visible to him almost immediately after the engineer completed the whistle signal. He called a warning, and the engineer immediately made an emergency application of the brakes. The collision occurred before the speed of the train had been materially reduced.

The rules and special instructions of this carrier provide that the foreman in charge of a track motor-car must, if practicable, obtain a line-up before starting a trip. In obtaining a line-up the foreman must not request information concerning any particular train movement but instead must request a line-up and inform the operator as to the territory over which he intends to operate the track motor-car. In the instant case, the foreman requested oral information, failed to obtain a copy of a line-up, and inquired as to the approximate leaving time of Extra 568 North at Eagle Lake. The operator failed to inform the train dispatcher as to the identity of the person who had requested the information. However, even though the foreman had obtained a written line-up that had been transmitted to the operator, he would have known only the location of the train at the time the line-up was issued. The train was not restricted by the issuance of the line-up, and the responsibility for computing the running time and judging the approximate arriving time of the train at Michaud was placed on the foreman. Line-ups are issued as information only and do not confer authority over trains or other track motor-cars, and the operators of track motor-cars are required to provide the same degree of protection when they have a line-up as when they do not have one. This method of operation does not provide adequate protection for the movement of track motor-cars.

Since January 1, 1944, the Commission has investigated 41 collisions, including the present case, which were caused by failure to provide adequate protection for the movement of track motor-cars. These accidents resulted in the death of 77 persons and the injury of 131 persons. In the reports covering the investigations of these accidents, the Commission repeatedly has recommended that the carrier involved should take measures to provide adequate protection for the movement of track motor-cars on its line.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to provide adequate protection for the movement of a track motor-car.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad Company provide adequate protection for the movement of track motor-cars on its line.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-fourth day of November, 1952.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

GEORGE W. LAIRD,
Acting Secretary.