

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 3142
BANGOR AND AROOSTOOK RAILROAD COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR WALKER, MAINE, ON
NOVEMBER 8, 1947

SUMMARY

Railroad: Bangor and Aroostook

Date: November 8, 1947

Location: Walker, Maine

Kind of accident: Rear-end collision

Trains involved: Freight : Freight

Train numbers: Extra 196 South : Extra 197 South

Engine numbers: 196 : 197-184

Consists: 54 cars, caboose : 74 cars, caboose

Estimated speeds: 15 m. p. h. : 25 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and train orders

Track: Single; tangent; 0.50 percent
ascending grade southward

Weather: Cloudy

Time: 9:50 p. m.

Casualties: 1 killed; 2 injured

Cause: Failure to provide adequate protection
for preceding train

Recommendation: That the Bangor and Aroostook Rail-
road Company establish an adequate
block system on the line on which
accident occurred

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 3142

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

BANGOR AND AROOSTOOK RAILROAD COMPANY

December 26, 1947

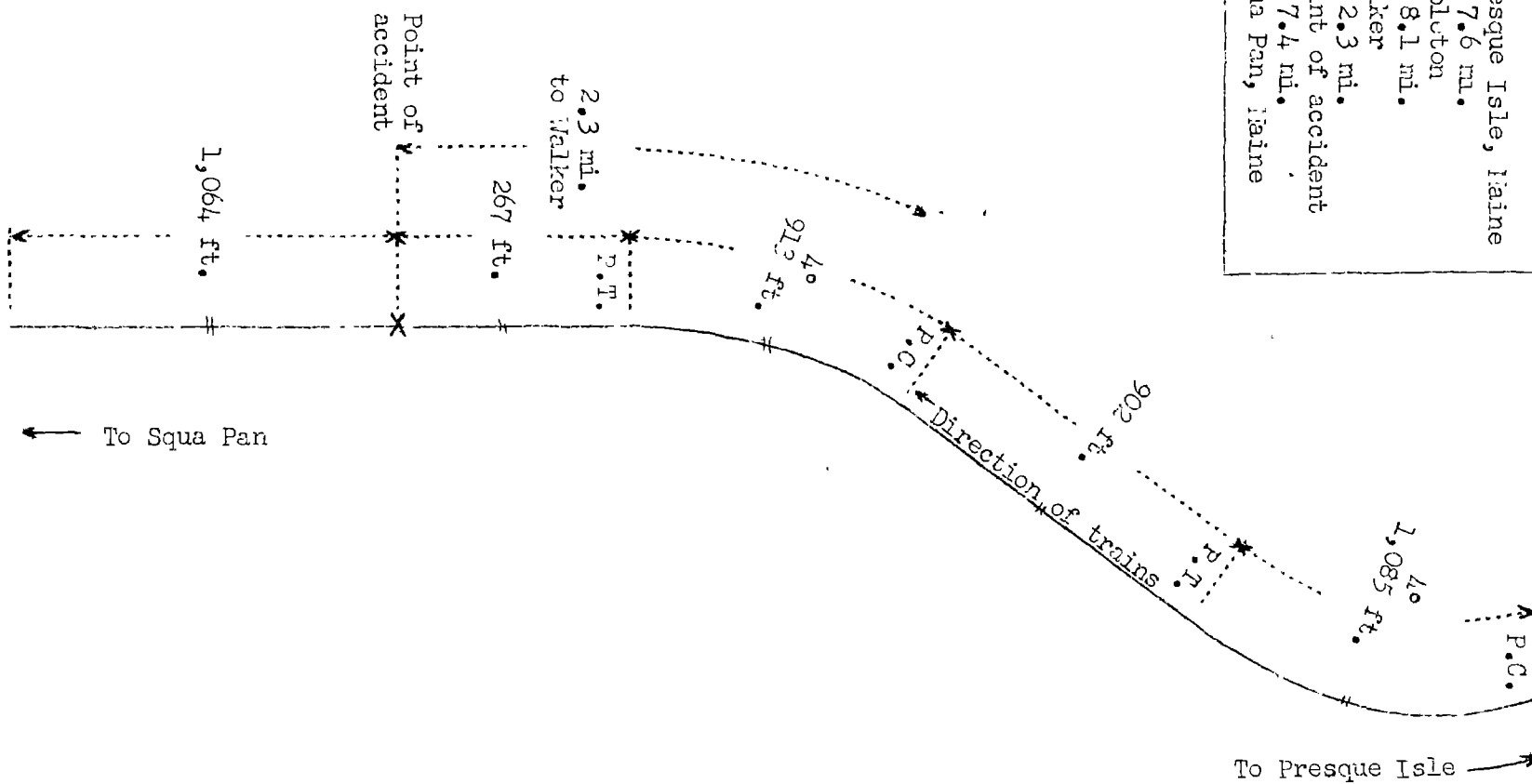
Accident near Walker, Maine, on November 8, 1947, caused
by failure to provide adequate protection for the
preceding train.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION^{1.}

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On November 8, 1947, there was a rear-end collision between two freight trains on the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad near Walker, Maine, 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 Maine Public Utilities Commission.

^{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. No. 3142
Bangor and Aroostook Railroad
Walker, Maine
November 8, 1947

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Northern Division extending between Presque Isle and Scua Pen, Maine, 25.4 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 18. miles south of Presque Isle and 2.3 miles south of the station at Walker. From the north there are, in succession, a 4° curve to the right 1,085 feet in length, a tangent 902 feet, a 4° curve to the left 913 feet and a tangent 267 feet to the point of accident and 1,064 feet southward. The grade varies between 0.278 percent and 0.823 percent ascending throughout a distance of 2.87 miles immediately north of the point of accident, where it is 0.50 percent ascending.

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

11. A train finding a fusee burning on or near its track must stop and not proceed until fusee is burned out.

19. The following signals will be displayed, * * * as markers, to indicate the rear of the train: * * * by night, green lights to the front and side and red lights to the rear; * * *

35. The following signals will be used by flagmen:

* * *

Night Signals--A red light,
A white light,
Torpedoes and
Fusees.

91. Unless some form of block signals is used, trains in the same direction must keep at least 10 minutes apart.

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.

* * *

In this territory the maximum authorized speeds are 50 miles per hour for passenger trains and 40 miles per hour for freight trains.

Description of Accident

Extra 196 South, a south-bound freight train, consisting of engine 196, 54 cars and a caboose, departed from Presque Isle, the last open office, at 8:50 p. m., passed Walker, and while it was moving at an estimated speed of 15 miles per hour the rear end was struck by Extra 197 South at a point 2.3 miles south of Walker.

Extra 197 South, a south-bound freight train, consisting of engines 197 and 184, coupled, 74 cars and a caboose, departed from Presque Isle at 9:18 p. m., passed Walker, and while moving at an estimated speed of 25 miles per hour it collided with Extra 196 South.

The caboose and the rear car of Extra 196 South, and the engines and the first three cars of Extra 197 South were derailed and damaged.

The engineer of the first engine of Extra 197 South was killed, and the fireman of the first engine and the engineer of the second engine were injured.

The weather was cloudy at the time of the accident, which occurred at 9:50 p. m.

Discussion

Extra 196 South, a south-bound freight train, was moving on tangent track and on a 0.50 percent ascending grade at a speed of about 15 miles per hour, in territory where the maximum authorized speed for freight trains is 40 miles per hour, when the rear end was struck about 9:50 p. m. by Extra 197 South, a south-bound freight train, at a point 267 feet south of the south end of a 4° curve to the left. Because of vegetation on the inside of the curve the view of the track ahead had by the engineer of the following train was materially restricted. The first the crew of the following train, which was moving at a speed of about 25 miles per hour, knew of anything being wrong was when the front brakeman, who was on the first engine, saw the reflection of a burning fuse and the lighted markers of the preceding train about 200 feet distant, and called a warning. Then the engineer of the

first engine moved the brake valve to emergency position, but the collision occurred before Extra 197 South could be stopped. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly en route.

Throughout a considerable distance immediately north of the point where the accident occurred the speed of Extra 196 South, as it was moving on the ascending grade, was considerably less than the maximum authorized speed for freight trains. The conductor and the flagman of Extra 196 South were in the caboose, and they were aware that their train was moving under circumstances in which it might be overtaken by a following train. However, no action was taken by either of these employees to provide protection against following trains until they saw the reflection of the headlight of Extra 197 South as this train was moving on the curve immediately south of the point where the collision occurred. Then the conductor gave stop signals with a lighted fusee. The conductor and the flagman jumped from the caboose just before the collision occurred.

In this territory trains are operated by timetable and train orders only. The only provision for spacing following trains is by the time-interval method enforced by operators at open stations, and by flagmen's signals. The rules require that a following train must be spaced at least 10 minutes behind a preceding train. In this case the preceding train departed from Presque Isle, 18 miles north of the point where the accident occurred, 28 minutes before the following train departed from that station, and all offices between Presque Isle and the point where the collision occurred were closed. There was no restriction to prevent the following train from moving at maximum authorized speed, and flag protection provided by the crew of the first train was the only means remaining for preventing the following train from overtaking the first one. If an adequate block system had been in use in this territory, the crew of the following train would have received definite information that the preceding train was occupying the main track in the same block.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to provide adequate protection for the preceding train.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad Company establish an adequate block system on the line on which this accident occurred.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-sixth day of December, 1947.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,

Secretary.