Inv-2098

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR

BUREAU OF SAFETY

ACCIDENT ON THE

BOSTON AND MAINE RAILROAD

MECHANICVILLE, N. Y.

SEPTEMBER 14, 1936

INVESTIGATION NO. 2098

SUMMARY

Railroad:	Boston and Maine	
Date:	September 14, 1936	
Location:	Mechanicville, N. Y.	
Kind of accident:	Collision	
Trains involved:	Switching movement	: Freight
Train numbers:		: D.& H. Symbol W-M-3
Engine numbers:	B.& M. 617	: D.& H. engine 1120
Consist:	37 cars	: 67 cars and caboose
Speed:	Standing	: 5-6 m.p.h.
Track:	2°40' curve to left for east-bound movements; 0.52 percent descending grade.	
Weather:	Clear	
Time:	5:10 p.m.	
Casualties:	1 killed and 2 injured	
Cause:	Failure of D.& H. train to be operated under proper control on a yard track	

October 19, 1936

To the Commission:

On September 14, 1936, there was a collision between a Delaware and Hudson freight train and a Boston and Maine yard engine handling a cut of cars, on the tracks of the latter railroad at Mechanicville, N. Y., which resulted in the death of 1 employee and the injury of 2 employees. The investigation of this accident was made in conjunction with representatives of the Public Service Commission of New York.

Location and method of operation

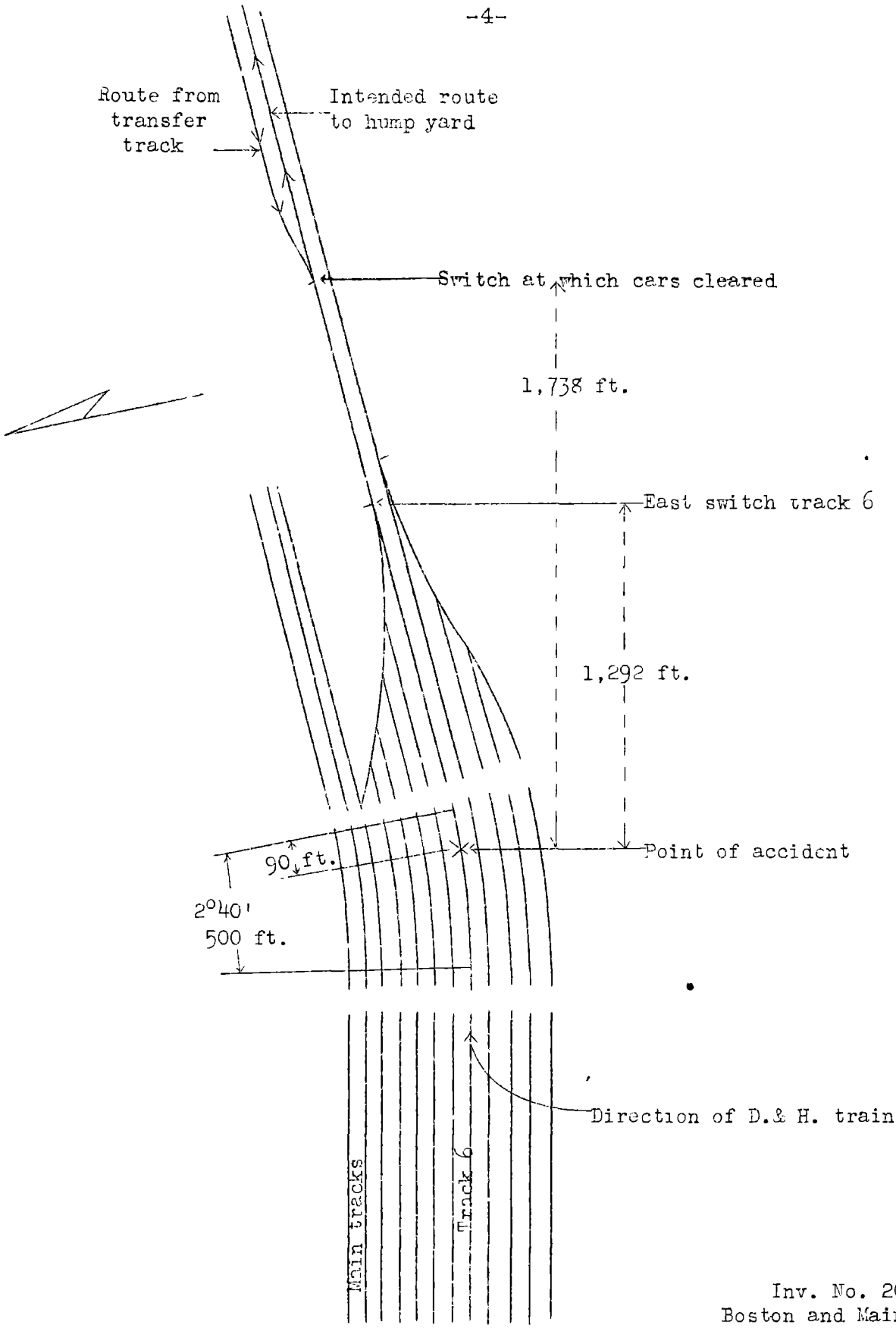
At Mechanicville there are several yards of the Boston and Maine Railroad and a yard of the Delaware and Hudson Railroad, and under joint arrangements, west-bound B. & M. trains for delivery to the D. & H. enter the D. & H. yard, and D. & H. trains from the west enter the receiving yard of the B. & M. Timetable directions on the D. & H. are north and south, and on the B. & M. are east and west; the latter directions are used in this report. The accident occurred within the B. & M. receiving yard, the eastern end of which is located about 1,546 feet west of WY Tower. Movements are made under yard rules and special instructions. Special instructions contained in the timetable of each railroad, covering the yarding of trains at Mechanicville, provide that:

> The crew of both railroads en route to Mechanicville will look for a number displayed on south corner of QS Tower, Crescent, which will indicate track in B. & M. receiving yard train will yard on. In absence of a track number being displayed, or in event crews do not clearly distinguish the number displayed, they will call B. & M. yardmaster on yard phone from Sucker Brook (main track switch to the yard) five rings, for instructions.

Crescent Tower is located 8.7 miles west of WY Tower, the tracks between these two points being used jointly by both railroads.

Rule 105 of the B. & M. operating rules provides in part, that trains or engines using a siding or yard track must proceed expecting to find it occupied.

The B. & M. receiving yard which parallels the main tracks on the south, extends a distance of 4,034 feet, and consists of



Inv. No. 2098
Boston and Maine R.R.
Mechanicville, N. Y.
September 14, 1936.

10 tracks numbered consecutively from north to south. The accident occurred on track 6, which is 3,570 feet in length, at a point 1,292 feet from its eastern end. Approaching from the west this track is tangent for a distance of 1,362 feet, followed by a 2°40' curve to the left 500 feet in length, the accident occurring on this curve at a point 92 feet from its eastern end. The grade is 0.52 percent descending east-bound.

Transfer and hump yards are located east of the receiving yard, the hump yard being south of the transfer yard, and the switch leading to the hump yard is located 1,758 feet east of the point of accident.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 5:10 p.m.

Description

B. & M. engine 617, engaged in switching service from the transfer yard to the hump yard, was backing up, hauling 37 cars, and proceeded westward on the transfer house track to the receiving yard, entered track 6 at its eastern end and proceeded a distance of 1,292 feet to clear the switch to the hump yard, and while waiting for a signal to move eastward toward the hump, was struck by D. & H. Train W-M-3.

Symbol Train W-M-3, a D. & H. east-bound freight train, consisted of 67 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 1120, and was in charge of Conductor Eckerson and Engineman Prindle. This train departed from Oneonta, N. Y., its initial terminal, at 1:45 p.m. and arrived at Sucker Brook switch leading to the receiving yard at Mechanicville, at 5:05 p.m. The train entered the yard, proceeded on track 6 a distance of 2,278 feet and collided with the tender of B. & M. engine 617, while traveling at a speed estimated to have been 5 or 6 miles per hour.

The engine of the D. & H. train was not derailed but its front end was slightly damaged. The first two cars in this train were derailed and telescoped; none of the remaining equipment in this train was derailed or damaged. The tender of B. & M. engine 617 was derailed and badly damaged, but neither the engine nor the cars were derailed or damaged. The employee killed was the head brakeman of the D. & H. train and those injured were the fireman of D. & H. train and the fireman of B. & M. engine 617.

Summary of evidence

Engineman Roy, of B. & M. yard engine 617, stated that

in making the movement from the transfer to the hump yard he was instructed by Yard Conductor Clark to pull into track 6 of the receiving yard preparatory to shoving the cars over the hump, and that in making this movement westward to track 6 he did not operate his engine at a speed of more than 15 miles per hour. When the cars cleared the switch leading to the hump yard, one of his trainmen gave him a stop signal and he had just brought the train to a stop, with the independent brake, when the D. & H. train struck his tender. Engineman Roy stated that cars were standing on track 5, on the inside of the curve, in the vicinity of the point of accident, but there were none on track 7. His view, however, was greatly restricted around the curve and he saw the approaching train just before the collision but was unable to say how far it was from his engine at that time as he was busy getting ready to leave. Engineman Roy had been regularly assigned to this job since July, 1936, and was thoroughly familiar with Mechanicville yard and the rules under which it is operated.

Helper Temple, of engine 617, stated that he was riding the last car of his train, when the movement was made from the transfer to the receiving yard, and after the cars had cleared the switch to the hump track he gave the engineman a stop signal. He then felt the slack run out, and in a short time he felt a jar and the cars moved eastward about 1 car length.

Helper Shields, of B. & M. engine 617, stated that he rode on the twelfth car from the head end as the cars were pulled into track 6 and dropped off at the switch leading from the transfer to the north lead used in entering the hump track; he threw the switch when the cars had cleared, and had been standing there from 2 to 4 minutes when he saw that an accident had occurred, although he had not heard a crash. He stated that while this movement is made daily, track 6 is used on an average of about five days during the week.

Foreman Clark, of B. & M. engine 617, who had been working in Mechanicville yard for 35 years, stated that after the movement was started from the transfer tracks to the receiving yard, he went to the hump yard and was there at the time of the accident. He received his instructions regarding the move to be made, from the yardmaster, although he was not instructed to use track 6. The general practice is to use track 6 except when the yardmaster gives instructions to use another track.

Engineman Prindle, of D. & H. Train W-M-3, stated that the first stop, after leaving the initial terminal, was made at the entrance switch to Mechanicville yard. After entering the yard

he reduced the speed to 5 or 6 miles per hour with the straight air brake. He was leaning out of the cab window and on seeing an object a short distance ahead he immediately applied the air brakes in emergency, and about the same time the fireman, and the chief fuel supervisor who was riding in the gangway on the left side, called a warning. He stated that due to the curve he was able to see ahead for only a distance of about 75 feet, and he thought the train stopped within a distance of 50 feet after making the emergency application. The air brakes had been tested before leaving the initial terminal and they functioned properly en route. Engineman Prindle further stated that he is familiar with rule 105 of the B. & M. rules, requiring that trains proceed on yard tracks expecting to find them occupied, and he believed that he was operating his train in accordance with this rule.

Chief Fuel Supervisor Woodard stated that he was standing in the gangway on the left side of the D. & H. engine, looking ahead, when he saw engine 617 moving toward his own engine about 200 or 250 feet distant. He immediately called a warning to the engineman who was leaning out of the window and who then applied the air brakes in emergency, at which time the train was traveling at a speed of 5 or 6 miles per hour. He dropped off the engine when it was about 30 or 40 feet from the B. & M. engine.

Conductor Eckerson, of D. & H. train, stated that his train stopped at the entrance switch to the yard at 5:05 p.m. and started to pull into the yard at 5:07 p.m. While the train was standing at the switch the air was bled on the caboose, and after the train had started the caboose was cut off and was trailing the train on the main track when the collision occurred, at approximately 5:10 p.m.

Assistant Yardsmaster Hall, of the B. & M. R.R., stated that he advised the towerman at Crescent at 4:40 p.m. to have the D. & H. crew leave their train on track 6, and prior to that time the crew of engine 617 had started to switch the transfer. He further stated that the latter crew performs this transfer movement every week day; it is frequently made without instructions from the yardmaster, and the crew has the right to use any track in the yard, subject to the rules.

Discussion

Under the Boston and Maine rules trains using a yard track must proceed expecting to find it occupied. Engineman Prindle stated that due to the curve he did not see the B. & M. engine until about 75 feet from it, at which time he applied the air brakes in emergency. Chief Fuel Supervisor Woodard, who was

riding on the left side of the gangway, stated that he saw the train moving toward them when it was between 200 and 250 feet distant and he called a warning, at which time the engineman was leaning out of the window and he applied the air brakes in emergency. Engineman Roy of B. & M. engine 617 stated that he had just brought his engine to a stop when the collision occurred. While the statements do not agree as to the distance between the two trains when the emergency application was made, it is evident that the speed was too high to stop the train within the distance the train ahead could be seen. Estimates of the speed, made by the members of the D. & H. crew, were 5 or 6 miles per hour. According to their own statements, however, as to the time consumed between the time the train left the main track switch to enter the yard at about 5:07 p.m. and the time of the accident at 5:10 p.m., and considering the distance the train traveled, it would indicate that the train was being operated at a speed in excess of 6 miles per hour.

Conclusion

This accident was caused by the failure of D. & H. Train W-M-3 to be operated under proper control on a yard track.

Respectfully submitted,

W. J. PATTERSON,

Director.