

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY CONCERNING AN
ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE BOSTON AND MAINE RAIL-
ROAD NEAR RUTLAND, MASS., ON AUGUST 3, 1932.

October 31, 1932.

To the Commission:

On August 3, 1932, there was a head-end collision between two freight trains on the Boston and Maine Railroad near Rutland, Mass., which resulted in the death of two employees and the injury of three employees. The investigation of this accident was held in conjunction with representatives of the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities.

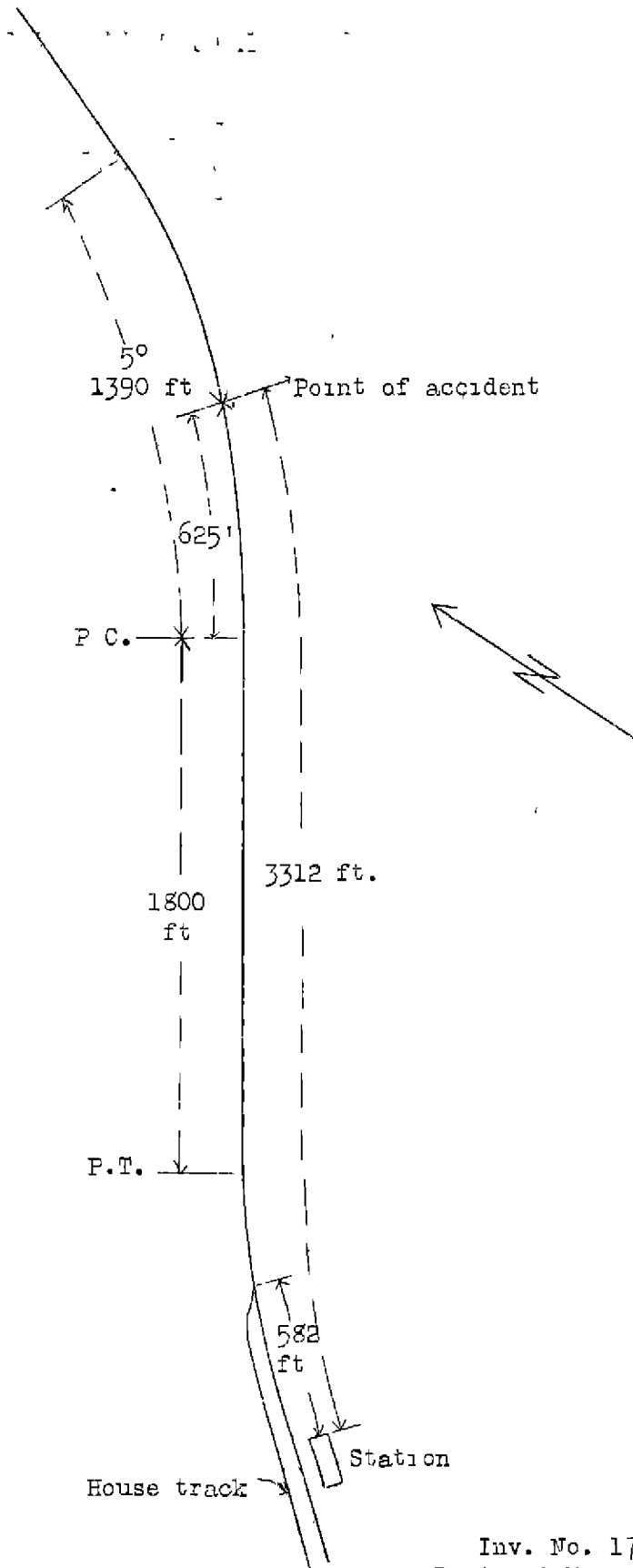
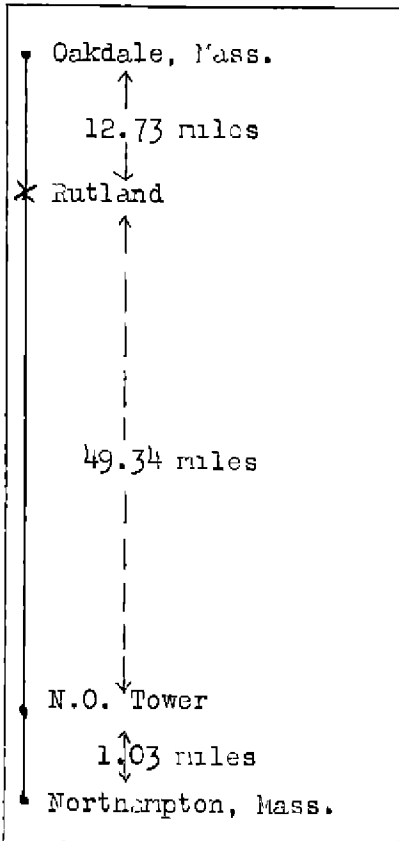
Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Massachusetts Branch of the Fitchburg Division extending between Northampton and Oakdale, Mass., a distance of 63.10 miles, in the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time-table and train orders, no block-signal system being in use. The accident occurred at a point 3,312 feet east of the station at Rutland, approaching this point from the west, the track is tangent for a distance of approximately 1,800 feet followed by a 5° curve to the left 1,390 feet in length, the accident occurring on this curve at a point 625 feet from its western end. Approaching from the east the track is tangent for a short distance, followed by the curve on which the accident occurred. The track is level at the point of accident. The house track at Rutland parallels the main track on the north and the east switch is located 582 feet east of the station. There is a dense woods adjacent to the track in the immediate vicinity of the point of accident, which restricts the view of trains approaching in either direction to approximately 460 feet.

A heavy rain was falling at the time of the accident, which occurred about 12.45 p.m.

Description

Eastbound freight train extra 1435 consisted of three cars and a caoose, hauled by engine 1435, and was in charge of Conductor Condon and Engineer Young. On August 2, instructions had been issued to train dispatchers to discontinue issuing train orders to local freight trains relieving their crews of protecting the rear end by flag, and substituting the use of work orders, Form H. It was in accordance with these new instructions to dispatchers that at N.O. Tower, (Northampton) 49.34 miles west of Rutland, the crew of extra 1435 received train order No. 106, Form 19, reading as follows:



Inv. No. 1778
 Boston & Maine R.R.
 Rutland, Mass.
 August 3, 1932.

"Eng 1435 works extra 650 six fifty AM until 550 five fifty PM between NO Tower and Norwottuck and between Canal Jct and Oakdale not protecting against extra trains"

Rutland is between Canal Jct. and Oakdale, and is the usual turnaround point for this run. This train left N.O. Tower at 7.25 a.m. and arrived at Rutland at 12.32 p.m., where it performed some switching and then departed, colliding with extra 1365 shortly afterwards while traveling at a speed estimated to have been between 20 and 25 miles per hour.

Westbound freight train extra 1365 consisted of four cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 1365, and was in charge of Conductor Coughlin and Engineman Goodfield. At Hudson, a station on the Terminal Division, train order No. 116, Form 19, was received, reading as follows:

"Eng 1365 works extra 1040 ten forty AM until 230 two thirty PM between Oakdale and Rutland not protecting against extra trains"

This train departed from Hudson at 11.08 a.m., and Oakdale, 12.73 miles east of Rutland, at 11.55 a.m., and was approaching Rutland when it collided with extra 1435 while traveling at an estimated speed of 15 miles per hour.

Both engines and their tenders were considerably damaged, the tender cisterns sliding forward and resting against the boilers. The engine truck and forward pair of driving wheels of engine 1365 and the engine truck and first two pairs of driving wheels of engine 1435 were derailed, none of the cars was derailed or damaged. The employees killed were the engineman and fireman of engine 1435.

Summary of evidence

Conductor Condon, of extra 1435, stated that he received train order No. 106 and delivered a copy of it to the engine crew but did not discuss its contents with the engineman at that time, the only time he mentioned the order to the engineman was while the train was at Belchertown, at which time the engineman commented about the work order extending as far east as Oakdale. Upon arriving at Rutland he explained the work to be performed at that point and also furnished the flagman and brakeman with a switch list, and he understood that the head brakeman gave the switching instructions to the engineman. While the switching was being performed a signal was given to move ahead, with the intention of moving far enough to clear the east switch of the house track and then back in on that track, but instead of stopping clear of the switch the train kept on going, without the air coupled up or pumped up on the cars, all of which were to have been left at Rutland. He had noticed that the train order was in the form of a work order which extended the working limits to Oakdale and thought it strange, as this was the first time an order of this nature had been received, having always received a straight running

order which extended only to Rutland, the regular turning point for his train. He also said that the engineman had been working on this run regularly for some time and could give no reason why he continued beyond the house-track switch.

Head Brakeman Tremble, of extra 1435, stated that when the train order was received both the engineman and the fireman read it, and he also read it. He went into the station at Rutland with the conductor and when he came out he boarded the engine and informed the engineman, who appeared to be perfectly normal, of the instructions given him by the conductor as to what switching was to be performed but did not give the switch list to the engineman. He then got off the engine and assisted with the switching, and while this work was in progress he gave a signal, from the fireman's side of the engine, intending to have the portion of the train then standing on the main track moved ahead preparatory to placing it on the house track. When this movement was made he got off at the house-track switch but the train did not stop, leaving him standing at the switch; he gave stop signals and also shouted a warning but the train continued eastward. These last stop signals were also given from the fireman's side, although he did not see the fireman at the time.

Flagman Harrington, of extra 1435, was on the platform of the caboose and when it passed the east house-track switch he gave stop signals which were not acted upon. He then climbed on top of the train and walked towards the engine giving stop signals and also calling to the engine crew but still no action appeared to be taken toward bringing the train to a stop. Upon reaching the forward end of the second car from the engine he could see into the engine cab over the first car, a coal car loaded with wood, but saw neither the engineman nor fireman, and the collision occurred before he could take further action to stop the train. He felt that something must have been wrong on the engine, but had no idea as to the nature of the difficulty.

Dispatcher Ingram stated that he issued train order No. 106 at N.O. Tower at 4.28 a.m., this order being put out in the form of a work order instead of a straight running order, this was the first time such an order had been put out to that train and it was issued in compliance with bulletin instructions. His purpose of extending the working limits to Oakdale was so that the crew could do the work at Rutland without protection. He called the attention of Dispatcher Wood, who relieved him, to the orders in effect, particularly order No. 106, and felt satisfied that he understood its requirements.

Dispatcher Wood stated that when he relieved Dispatcher Ingram his attention was called to the fact that engine 1435 had a work order but he understood Dispatcher Ingram to say that it extended only to Rutland. He did not read the order or examine the order book at that time, and paid no attention to train order No. 106 until he was issuing train order No. 116 at 9.59 a.m. to engine 1365. He then failed thoroughly to

examine the order book to determine the exact requirements of train order No. 106, as he was still relying on the information given him by Dispatcher Ingram, also having in mind that Rutland was the terminal for both trains. He admitted that his failure properly to examine the book caused him to overlook the fact that train order No. 106 gave extra 1435 rights to Oakdale, and that when he issued train order No. 116 to extra 1365 it resulted in a lap order.

General Superintendent Rourke stated that the change in the method and form of issuing train orders to local freight trains on the Fitchburg Division was for the purpose of creating a uniform practice on the entire system, as this practice had been in effect on all other divisions for some time. He considered a local freight train having work to do at all intermediate points as falling more or less in the category of a work train, and that the work order was entirely applicable in this case and perfectly safe when properly used.

Conclusions

This accident was caused primarily by a lap order.

Train Order No. 106 was issued to engine 1435 by Dispatcher Ingram at 4.38 a.m., giving this engine the right to work as far east as Oakdale, some distance beyond Rutland, this order was among those transferred to Dispatcher Wood when he came on duty at 6 a.m. He did not read it, however, and at 9.59 a.m., he issued train order No. 116 to engine 1365 giving this engine right to work westward as far as Rutland, thus creating a lap order. Dispatcher Wood explained his error by saying he understood train order No. 106 gave extra 1435 right only as far as Rutland, and therefore did not read it carefully to ascertain its contents definitely.

The trains involved were local freight trains, with Rutland as their turn-around point, and prior to the day of the accident these trains had been operated as extra trains under straight running orders. Beginning August 3, however, the practice was changed so as to operate them as extra trains under work train orders, in accordance with the practice in effect on other divisions of the railroad. It was while holding such an order, and during the course of switching at Rutland, that the engineman of extra 1435 proceeded eastward, with cars which should have been left at Rutland, and without pumping up the air brake system. He had right to the track so far as his orders were concerned but why he failed to heed the stop signals given by other members of the crew, and why he proceeded beyond the turn-around point for his run, is not known as he was killed in the accident.

Respectfully submitted,

W.P.BORLAND,

Director.