

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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REPORT NO. 3722  
BOSTON AND MAINE RAILROAD COMPANY  
IN RE ACCIDENT  
AT MOUNT HERMON, MASS., ON  
DECEMBER 6, 1956

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## SUMMARY

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Date: December 6, 1956

Railroad: Boston and Maine

Location: Mount Hermon, Mass.

Kind of accident: Rear-end collision

Equipment involved: Track motor-car : Passenger train  
445

Train number: : 70

Locomotive number: : Diesel-electric  
unit 3812

Consist: : 2 cars

Estimated speeds: 10 m. p. h. : 20 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable, train orders, and automatic  
block-signal system

Track: Single; tangent; 0.56 percent ascending  
grade southward

Weather: Foggy

Time: 1:33 p. m.

Casualties: 1 killed; 1 injured

Cause: Failure of operator of track motor-car  
to clear time of regular train as  
required by rule

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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REPORT NO. 3722

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

BOSTON AND MAINE RAILROAD COMPANY

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January 8, 1957

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Accident at Mount Hermon, Mass., on December 6, 1956,  
caused by the failure of the operator of a track  
motor-car to clear the time of a regular train as  
required by rule.

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

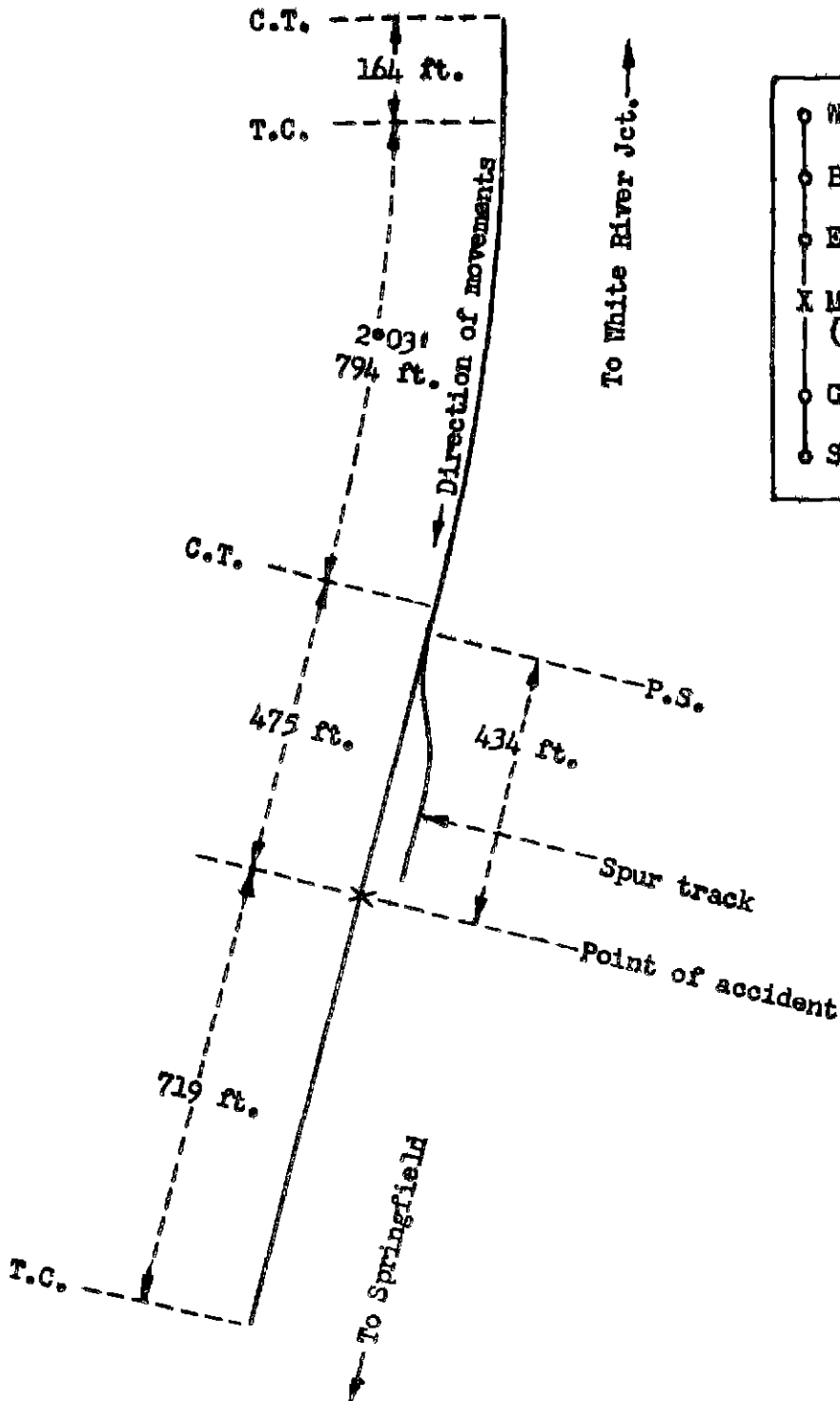
TUGGLE, Commissioner:

On December 6, 1956, there was a rear-end collision between a track motor-car and a passenger train on the Boston and Maine Railroad at Mount Hermon, Mass., which resulted in the death of one maintenance-of-way employee, and the injury of one maintenance-of-way employee. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities.

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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 Tuggle for consideration and disposition.



○	White River Jct., Vt.	62.87 mi.
○	Brattleboro, Vt.	10.65 mi.
○	East Northfield, Mass.	3.51 mi.
X	Mount Hermon	(Point of accident)
○	Greenfield	10.09 mi.
○	Springfield, Mass.	36.07 mi.

Report No. 3722  
 Boston and Maine Railroad  
 Mount Hermon, Mass.  
 December 6, 1956

### Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Fitchburg Division extending between White River Jct., Vt., and Springfield, Mass., 123.19 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders, and an automatic block-signal system. At Mount Hermon, Mass., 77.03 miles south of White River Jct., a spur track diverges from the main track toward the east. The accident occurred on the main track at a point 434 feet south of the spur-track switch. From the north there are, in succession, a tangent 164 feet in length, a 2°03' curve to the right 794 feet, and a tangent 475 feet to the point of accident and 719 feet southward. The grade is 0.66 percent ascending southward at the point of accident.

This carrier's rules for the operation of track motor-cars read in part as follows:

991. (a) Before occupying main track, the foreman, maintainer, or motor car operator must, where possible, ascertain from telegraph operator \* \* \* the location of any trains expected to be run over the territory where the motor car is to be operated. \* \* \*

\* \* \*

994. Motor cars shall clear scheduled trains ten (10) minutes in advance of the time the trains are due.

#### SECTION FOREMEN.

1033. They must have standard watch, copy of the current time-table \* \* \* and be thoroughly familiar \* \* \* with the time of trains over their sections. \* \* \*

#### PATROL FOREMEN.

1067. \* \* \* They will be governed by Rules for Section Foremen so far as they are applicable to their duties.

The maximum authorized speeds in the vicinity of the point of accident are 50 miles per hour for passenger trains and 20 miles per hour for track motor-cars.

### Description of Accident

About 12:50 p. m. track motor-car 445, occupied by a track patrol foreman and one trackman, departed south-bound from East Northfield, Mass., 3.51 miles north of Mount Hermon. It was stopped at the spur-track switch at Mount Hermon during a period of about 10 minutes. It was then started southward, and while moving at an estimated speed of 10 miles per hour it was struck by No. 70. The accident occurred 434 feet south of the switch.

No. 70, a south-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of Diesel-electric unit 3812 and two coaches. This train departed from East Northfield, the last open office, at 1:28 p. m., 1 minute late, and while moving at a speed of about 20 miles per hour it struck track motor-car 445.

The track motor-car, which was not derailed, was badly damaged. No. 70 stopped with the front of the locomotive about 350 feet south of the point of accident. The front of the locomotive was slightly damaged.

The patrol foreman was killed. The trackman was injured.

The weather was foggy at the time of the accident, which occurred at 1:33 p. m.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 15.9 trains.

Track motor-car 445 was of the belt-drive type and was powered by a 9-horsepower engine. It weighed 681 pounds and had seating capacity for four persons. It was equipped with an aluminum top, a windshield, and a canvas curtain at the rear. It was insulated to prevent the shunting of track circuits.

### Discussion

On the day of the accident the patrol foreman and the trackman reported for duty at Greenfield, 10.09 miles south of Mount Hermon, at 6:15 a. m. They patrolled the track from Greenfield to Brattleboro, Vt., 14.16 miles north of Mount Hermon, and then returned to East Northfield. After they took their lunch period the foreman obtained a line-up of train movements from the operator. The line-up contained information as to the location of several freight trains, but it did not contain any reference to No. 70. On this line it is not customary to list first-class trains in line-ups unless the trains are late. After the foreman obtained the line-up he and the trackman departed south-bound on their track motor-car. The foreman did not mention train movements.

They stopped at several switches, including the spur-track switch at Mount Hermon, to permit the trackman to tighten bolts. The trackman thought that they remained at the latter switch about 10 minutes. During this time the foreman remained with the track motor-car and left the engine of the car running. The trackman said that when the work was completed he boarded the car and asked the foreman whether No. 70 would not be due within a few minutes. He said that the foreman started the car southward and did not reply. The trackman did not know whether the foreman looked at his watch. At this time the range of vision was restricted by fog to a distance which the trackman thought was about 400 feet. He said that after the car had moved southward about 150 feet he heard the engineer of No. 70 sounding the grade-crossing whistle signal for a rail-highway grade crossing located 173 feet north of the spur-track switch. He then saw No. 70 approaching. He warned the foreman, and he said that the foreman looked toward the train and then apparently attempted to increase the speed of the car. The trackman saw that the car would be overtaken by the train, and he warned the foreman a second time and alighted from the car. The foreman did not attempt to alight until immediately before the collision occurred.

As No. 70 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead from the control compartment at the front of the locomotive. The members of the train crew were in the cars of the train. The headlight was lighted. The enginemen said that they first saw the track motor-car ahead when the locomotive was in the immediate vicinity of the rail-highway grade crossing north of the spur-track switch. When they saw the car, the engineer immediately made an emergency application of the brakes. According to the tape of the speed-recording device the speed of the train was approximately 45 miles per hour when the brake application became effective. The speed had been considerably reduced when the collision occurred.

The rules of this carrier provide that the operators of track motor-cars must clear the times of scheduled trains 10 minutes. No. 70 is due to leave East Northfield at 1:27 p. m. There is no time shown for this train at Mount Hermon, and under the rules the track motor-car was required to be clear of the main track not later than 1:17 p. m., 16 minutes before the accident occurred. The foreman was killed in the accident, and the reason for his failure to clear the time of the train is not known.

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During the past 10 years the Commission has investigated 67 collisions, including the present case, in which track motor-cars were involved. These accidents resulted in the death of 94 persons and the injury of 192 persons.

Cause

This accident was caused by the failure of the operator of a track motor-car to clear the time of a regular train as required by rule.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this eighth day of January, 1957.

By the Commission, Commissioner Tuggle.

(SEAL)

HAROLD D. McCoy,  
Secretary.