

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2927

CENTRAL VERMONT RAILWAY

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT

NEAR SHARON, VT., ON

APRIL 24, 1946

SUMMARY

Railroad: Central Vermont

Date: April 24, 1946

Location: Sharon, Vt.

Kind of accident: Head-end collision

Equipment involved: Track motor-car : Freight train

Train number: : Extra 460 North

Engine number: : 460

Consist: Motor-car 136 : 14 cars, caboose

Estimated speed: Standing : 40 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and train orders

Track: Single; 3°15' curve; 0.74 percent ascending grade northward

Weather: Clear

Time: 7:10 a. m.

Casualties: 1 killed

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

Recommendation: That the Central Vermont Railway provide adequate train-order or block-signal protection for the movement of track motor-cars on its line

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2987

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

CENTRAL VERMONT RAILWAY

June 7, 1946.

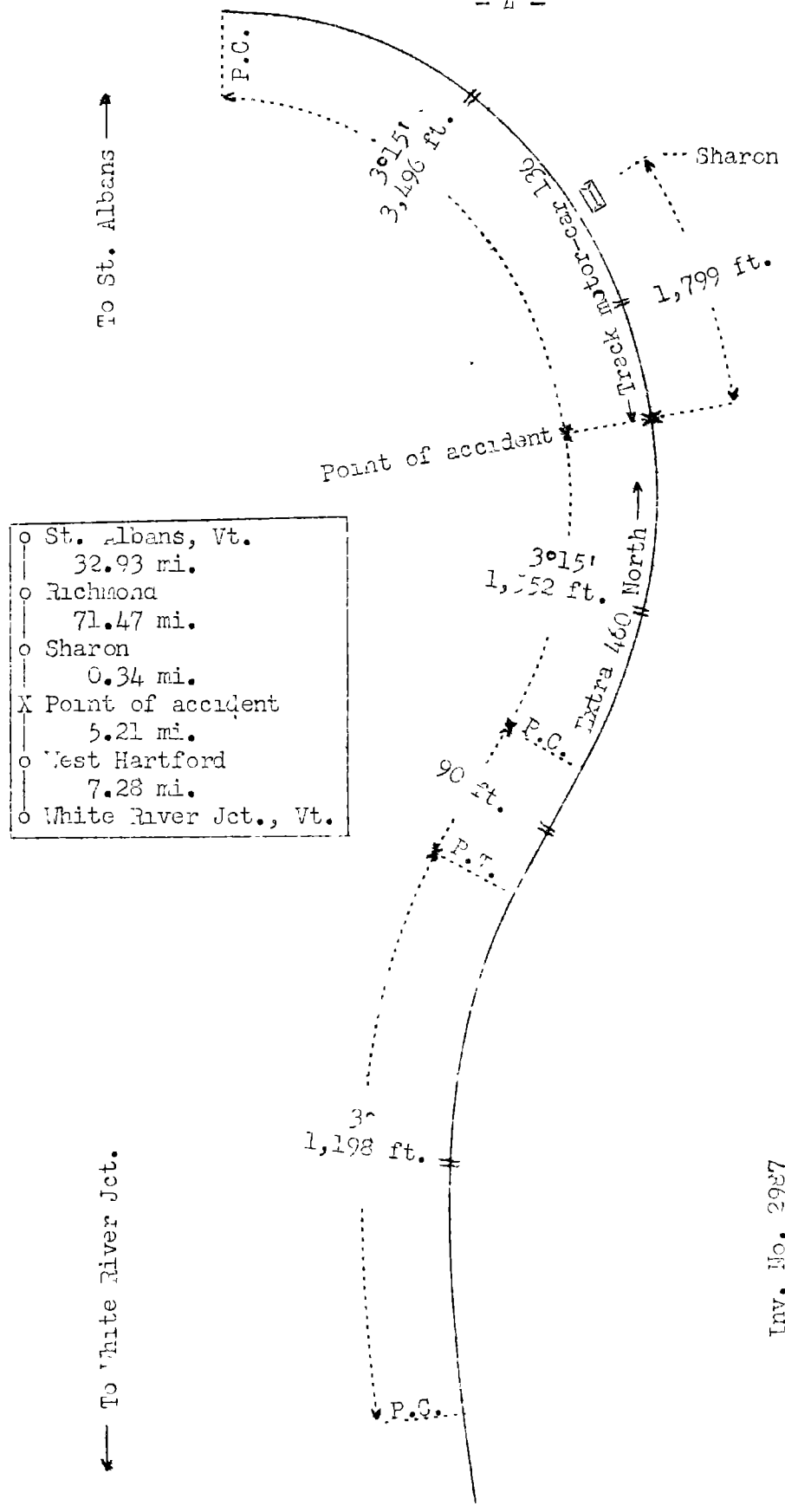
Accident near Sharon, Vt., on April 24, 1946, caused by
failure to provide adequate protection for the move-
ment of a track motor-car.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On April 24, 1946, there was a head-end collision between a track motor-car and a freight train on the line of the Central Vermont Railway near Sharon, Vt., which resulted in the death of one employee. This accident was investigated in conjunction with representatives of the Vermont Public Service Commission.

¹Under 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.



o	St. Albans, Vt.	32.93 mi.
o	Richmond	71.47 mi.
o	Sharon	0.34 mi.
X	Point of accident	5.21 mi.
o	West Hartford	7.28 mi.
o	White River Jct., Vt.	

Inv. No. 2987
 Central Vermont Railway
 Sharon, Vt.
 April 24, 1946

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the line of the Central Vermont Railway extending between White River Jct. and St. Albans, Vt., 117.23 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 12.49 miles north of White River Jct., at a point 1,799 feet south of the station at Sharon. From the south there are, in succession, a 3° curve to the right 1,198 feet in length, a tangent 90 feet, and a 3°15' curve to the left 1,552 feet to the point of accident and 3,496 feet northward. The grade is 0.74 percent ascending northward.

Maintenance-of-Way Rules and Instructions read in part as follows:

738. The person in charge of a motor * * * car used on the main track must carry a copy of the current time-table, and the car must always be equipped with the required flagging equipment when so used. (See Rule 763).

744. Before using a car which is not to be operated under train orders, or under flagging protection, the person in charge of the car * * * must clearly instruct each person as to the part he must take in an emergency.

753. * * *

(b) A car, not operating under train orders, must be run with great caution around obscure curves * * * and must be stopped frequently so that an approaching train may be heard. * * *

763. * * *

(a) Motor * * * cars must always be equipped, when in use, with: -

- 4 red flags
- 4 yellow flags
- 4 green flags
- 12 torpedoes

* * *

Special bulletin instructions dated April 20, 1940, read in part as follows:

Circular No. 53-S April 20, 1940.

MORNING LINE-UPS FOR SECTION FOREMEN, * * *

* * *

Dispatchers' phones are not to be used by section foremen for direct communication with the dispatchers excepting in emergencies and/or as permitted in the following paragraphs.

1. Exactly at 7:00 A.M. daily, except Sundays, Dispatchers will broadcast a line-up of all trains on the road, * * *
2. At points where operators are on duty this line-up shall be obtained by them and given to the section foremen in writing.
3. At points where no operator is on duty, section foreman will listen in on dispatchers' phone for the 7:00 A.M. broadcast. Failing to obtain this line-up the section foreman must then communicate with the nearest operator by commercial phone.

* * *

The maximum authorized speed for the freight train involved was 45 miles per hour, and for track motor-cars, 25 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

About 7:08 a. m. track motor-car 136 departed south-bound from a point 360 feet south of the station at Sharon and 12.49 miles north of White River Jct., and about 2 minutes later it was struck by Extra 460 North.

Extra 460 North, a north-bound freight train, consisted of engine 460, 14 cars and a caboose. This train departed from White River Jct., the last open office, at 6 a. m., performed switching service at West Hartford, 5.21 miles south of the point of accident, then departed at 7 a. m., and while moving at an estimated speed of 40 miles per hour it struck track motor-car 136.

The motor-car was demolished, and the wreckage was moved northward about 468 feet on the front of the engine of Extra 460 to the point where the train stopped.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 7:10 a. m.

The employee killed was the foreman of the track force.

According to data furnished by this carrier, motor-car 136 was of the 4-wheel type, weighed 750 pounds and was 6 feet 10 inches in length. It was powered by a 4-horsepower gasoline motor and was equipped with a V-shape windshield at the front end. It was equipped with extension lift handles.

Discussion

The investigation disclosed that about 7:01 a. m. the train dispatcher issued by telephone information regarding train movements in the territory involved. Under the rules, foremen of section forces are required to listen on the dispatchers' telephone circuit at 7 a. m. for a daily line-up of the movement of trains. The line-up issued at 7:01 a. m. on the day of the accident included information that Extra 460 North had departed from White River Jet. at 6 a. m. About 7:08 a. m., track motor-car 136, which was occupied by the foreman and three laborers, departed southward from Sharon, 12.83 miles north of White River Jet. This motor-car had reached a point about 1,700 feet south of Sharon and had attained a speed of about 10 miles per hour when a member of the force, who was maintaining a lookout ahead, saw Extra 460 about 500 feet distant. He warned the foreman, who immediately applied the brakes and stopped the motor-car. The motor-car was struck by Extra 460 while the section men were attempting to remove it from the track. The foreman was killed.

Extra 460 departed from West Hartford about 7 a. m. As this train was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 40 miles per hour, in territory where the maximum authorized speed for this train was 45 miles per hour. No train order had been issued restricting the authority of this train to proceed at its maximum authorized speed. The enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead, and the first these employees were aware of anything being wrong was when the fireman saw motor-car 136 about 500 feet distant. The fireman called a warning to the engineer, who immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position. The accident occurred before the speed of the train became materially reduced. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly en route. Because of track curvature and a high embankment on the inside of the curve, the view of the point of accident from either direction was restricted to a distance of about 500 feet.

Track motor-cars move in this territory on the authority of an oral line-up issued at 7 a. m. daily except Sunday by the train dispatcher. Section-force foremen at closed offices and operators at open offices are required to listen to the oral line-up, but operators only are required to repeat the line-up or to listen to its repetition. The train dispatcher said that he issued the usual line-up at 7 a. m. on the day of the accident, entered it in the train-order book, and checked it as the operator at Richmond, 71.47 miles north of Sharon, repeated it. The dispatcher said that he had no knowledge as to the understanding had by the foreman of the section force involved, as foremen are not required to repeat the line-up or to inform the dispatcher that they are listening on the telephone. Since the foreman involved was killed in the accident, it could not be determined what understanding he had concerning the line-up.

Surviving members of the section force said that when they reported for duty about 7 a. m. the foreman was writing in a notebook as he listened on the dispatcher's telephone, located at the station at Sharon and about 300 feet north of the tool house where the motor-car was housed. When the foreman ordered the motor-car placed on the track, he did not inform any member of the force as to the movement of trains in that vicinity. These employees said that on some occasions the foreman informed them concerning train movements, but it was not customary.

During the past two years the Commission has investigated nine collisions involving motor-cars on other railroads. These accidents resulted in the death of 22 persons and the injury of 19, and were caused by failure to provide adequate protection for the movement of track motor-cars. In the instant case, the members of the crew of Extra 460 were not informed by train order as to the location of the opposing motor-car, and no protection was provided for the motor-car. If adequate train-order protection had been provided for the movement of the track motor-car, this accident might have been prevented. If proper block protection had been provided, neither the motor-car nor the opposing train would have been permitted to enter a block occupied by an opposing movement.

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 Central Vermont Railway provide adequate train-order or block-signal protection for the movement of track motor-cars on its line. An order to show cause why it should not do so will be served on said carrier.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this seventh day of June, 1946.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.