INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3387

THE CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO RAILROAD COMPANY

IN RE ACCIDENT

NEAR OWENS, OHIO, ON

JANUARY 23, 1951

SUMMARY

Date:	January 23, 1951	
Railroad:	Chesapeake and Ohio	
Location:	Owens, Ohio	
Kind of accident:	Rear-end collision	
Trains involved:	Freight	: Freight
Train numbers:	97	: Extra 3031 West
Engine numbers:	1646	: 3031
Consists:	107 cars, 2 cabooses	: 16 cars, caboose
Estimated speeds:	Standing	: 35 m. p. h.
Operation:	Signal indications	
Tracks:	Double; tangent; 0.15 percent ascending grade westward	
Weather:	Snowing	
Time:	3:10 p. m.	
Casualties:	1 killed; 2 injured	
Cause:	Failure to operate following train in accordance with signal indications	

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3397

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

THE CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO RAILROAD COMPANY

April 9, 1951

Accident near Owens, Ohio, on January 23, 1951, caused by failure to operate the following train in accordance with signal indications.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION[1]

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On January 23, 1951, there was a rear-end collision between two freight trains on the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway near Owens, Ohio, which resulted in the death of one employee and the injury of two employees.

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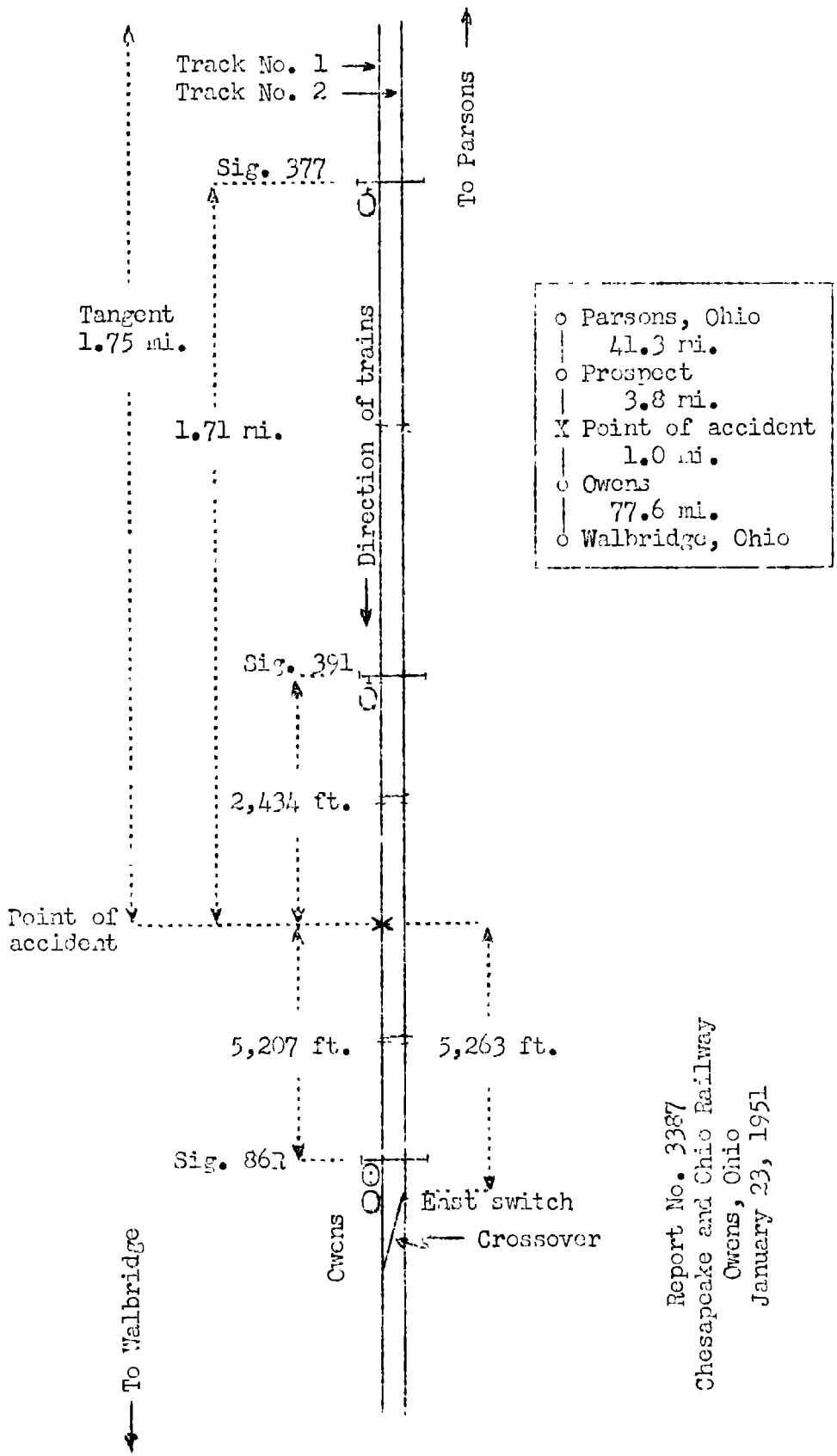
[1] Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Patterson for consideration and disposition.



Report No. 3387
Chesapeake and Ohio Railway
Owens, Ohio
January 23, 1951

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Hocking Division extending between Parsons and Walbridge, Ohio, 123.7 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a double-track line, over which trains are operated in either direction on either track by signal indications. From north to south the main tracks are designated as No. 1 and No. 2. The accident occurred on track No. 1 at a point 45.1 miles west of Parsons and 5,263 feet east of Owens. From the east there is a tangent 1.75 miles to the point of accident and a considerable distance westward. In the vicinity of the point of accident the grade for west-bound movements is 0.15 percent ascending.

Automatic signals 377 and 391 and controlled signal 86R, governing west-bound movements on track No. 1, are located, respectively, 1.71 miles east, 2,434 feet east, and 5,207 feet west of the point of accident. These signals are of the color-light type. Signal 86R is continuously lighted, and signals 377 and 391 are approach lighted. Signals 377 and 391 display three aspects each. Aspects applicable to this investigation and the corresponding indications and names are as follows:

Signal	Aspect	Indication	Name
377	Green over number plate	PROCEED	Clear
377 391	Yellow over number plate	PREPARE TO STOP AT NEXT SIGNAL, TRAIN EXCEEDING MEDIUM SPEED MUST AT ONCE REDUCE TO THAT SPEED.	Approach
391	Red over number plate	STOP: THEN PROCEED IN ACCORDANCE WITH RULE 509-(a)-C	Stop and Proceed

86R	Red-over-red	STOP	Stop
86R	Yellow-over-red	PREPARE TO STOP AT NEXT SIGNAL, TRAIN EXCEEDING MEDIUM SPEED MUST AT ONCE REDUCE TO THAT SPEED.	Approach

The controlling circuits of signals 377 and 391 are so arranged that when the block of signal 391 is occupied signal 377 indicates Approach and signal 391 indicates Stop and Proceed.

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

DEFINITIONS

MEDIUM SPEED.--One-half maximum authorized speed, but not to exceed 30 miles per hour.

RESTRICTED SPEED.--Proceed prepared to stop short of train, obstruction, or anything that may require the speed of the train to be reduced, but not exceeding 15 miles per hour.

27. A signal imperfectly displayed, or the absence of a signal at a place where a signal is usually shown, must be regarded as the most restrictive indication that can be given by that signal * * *

* * *

34. All members of train and engine crews must, when practicable, communicate to each other by its name the indication of all signals affecting the movement of their train.

35. The following signals will be used by flagmen:

Day signals--A red flag,
Torpedoes and
Fusees.

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

99 (a). When a train stops under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must go back immediately with flagman's signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection, placing two torpedoes, and when necessary, in addition, displaying lighted fusees. * * *

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509 (a). * * *

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C. When a train is stopped by a Stop and Proceed Signal, it may proceed at once at restricted speed.

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The maximum authorized speed for freight trains was 50 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

No. 97, a west-bound third-class freight train, consisted of engine 1646, 107 cars and 2 cabooses. This train passed Prospect, the last open office, 4.8 miles east of Owens, at 2:57 p. m., passed signal 377, which indicated Proceed, passed signal 391, which indicated Approach, and stopped at signal 86R, which indicated Stop. About 5 minutes later the rear end was struck by Extra 3031 West.

Extra 3031 West, a west-bound freight train, consisted of engine 3031, 16 cars and a caboose. This train passed Prospect at 3:04 p. m., passed signal 377, which indicated Approach, passed signal 391, which indicated Stop and Proceed, and while moving at an estimated speed of 35 miles per hour it struck the rear end of No. 97.

Both cabooses and the rear four cars of No. 97 were derailed and stopped in various positions on or near the track. The cabooses and the rear two cars were destroyed. The other derailed cars were badly damaged. Engine 3031 stopped on its left side and parallel to the track, with the front end 215 feet west of the point of accident. The first eight cars and the front truck of the ninth car of Extra 3031 West were derailed and stopped in various positions on or near the track. The engine and the tender were badly damaged. The first to the fifth cars, inclusive, were badly damaged. The other derailed cars were slightly damaged.

The fireman of Extra 3031 West was killed. The engineer and the flagman of Extra 3031 West were injured.

It was snowing at the time of the accident, which occurred about 3:10 p. m.

Discussion

As No. 97 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the engineer, the fireman and the front brakeman were in the cab of the engine, and the conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. The engineer and the fireman said that signal 377 indicated Clear. Signal 391 indicated Approach, and the speed of the train was reduced to comply with the indication. The fireman said that he could not distinguish the aspect of signal 391 because of falling snow and snow accumulated on the signal. However, the engineer said that he saw the aspect and called the Approach indication to the fireman. The engineer and the fireman said that as their train was approaching signal 86R they could not distinguish the aspect displayed by that signal because of snow, and that the train was stopped at signal 86R. After the train stopped, the engineer and the fireman observed that the signal indicated Stop. Immediately after the train stopped, the flagman alighted from the caboose and proceeded eastward to provide flag protection. About 4 minutes later the aspect of signal 86R changed to indicate Approach. The engineer then sounded the engine-whistle signal to recall the flagman, and, about the same time, the flagman heard Extra 3031 West approaching. He immediately lighted a red fusee and gave stop signals. The conductor also heard Extra 3031 West approaching, called a warning to the flagman, and gave stop signals as he proceeded eastward. The engineer of Extra 3031 West did not acknowledge their signals. The conductor said that when the engine of Extra 3031 West passed him he called a warning to the engineer. The conductor and the flagman of No. 97 were in the vicinity of the caboose of Extra 3031 West when that train stopped.

As Extra 3031 West was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 35 miles per hour. The engineer and the fireman were in the cab of the engine, and the conductor, the front brakeman and the flagman were in the caboose. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. The engineer said that because of snow, and of smoke from the engine, he could not distinguish the aspect displayed by signal 377.

However, he said that the fireman called the indication of the signal as Clear and, therefore, he did not take any action to reduce the speed of the train. The engineer said that signal 391 also was obscured from his view by snow and smoke. He said the fireman also called the indication of the signal as Clear, and therefore he did not take any action to reduce the speed of the train. He said he observed the caboose of No. 97 when it was about 600 feet distant. He immediately made an emergency application of the brakes, but the speed of the train was not materially reduced before the collision occurred. He said he did not see a lighted red fusee, and did not see anyone giving stop signals before the collision occurred. He did not hear the conductor of No. 97 call a warning to him.

The conductor of No. 97 said that when the caboose of No. 97 passed signals 377 and 391, he observed from a distance of about 50 feet that each indicated Stop and Proceed. No surviving member of the crew of Extra 3031 West saw the aspect displayed by either signal. The conductor and the flagman of Extra 3031 West said the aspects could not be distinguished from the caboose. The flagman of No. 97 said that when he proceeded eastward to provide flag protection after the accident occurred signal 391 indicated Stop and Proceed. The flagman of Extra 3031 West said that he observed the aspect of signal 391 about 30 minutes after the accident occurred and that it indicated Stop and Proceed. Each signal displayed the proper aspect for the preceding train. After the accident occurred, the signal system in the vicinity of the point of accident was tested and was found to be functioning properly.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to operate the following train in accordance with signal indications.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this ninth day of April, 1951.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,

Secretary.