

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2822  
THE CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO RAILWAY COMPANY  
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT  
NEAR WALBRIDGE, KY., ON  
AUGUST 30, 1944

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SUMMARY

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Railroad: Chesapeake and Ohio

Date: August 30, 1944

Location: Walbridge, Ky.

Kind of accident: Head-end collision

Trains involved: Freight : Passenger

Train numbers: Second 85 : 36

Engine numbers: 1342 : 439

Consist: 113 cars, caboose : 7 cars

Estimated speed: Standing : 30 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable, train orders and  
manual-block system

Track: Single; 4°35' curve; 0.18 percent  
descending grade eastward

Weather: Dense fog

Time: 8:05 a. m.

Casualties: 1 killed; 75 injured

Cause: Failure of the railroad to provide  
adequate safeguards for the move-  
ment of trains

Recommendation: That the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway  
Company establish an adequate block  
system on the line on which this  
accident occurred

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2822

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

THE CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO RAILWAY COMPANY

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September 25, 1944.

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Accident near Walbridge, Ky., on August 30, 1944, caused  
by failure of the railroad to provide adequate safe-  
guards for the movement of trains.

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

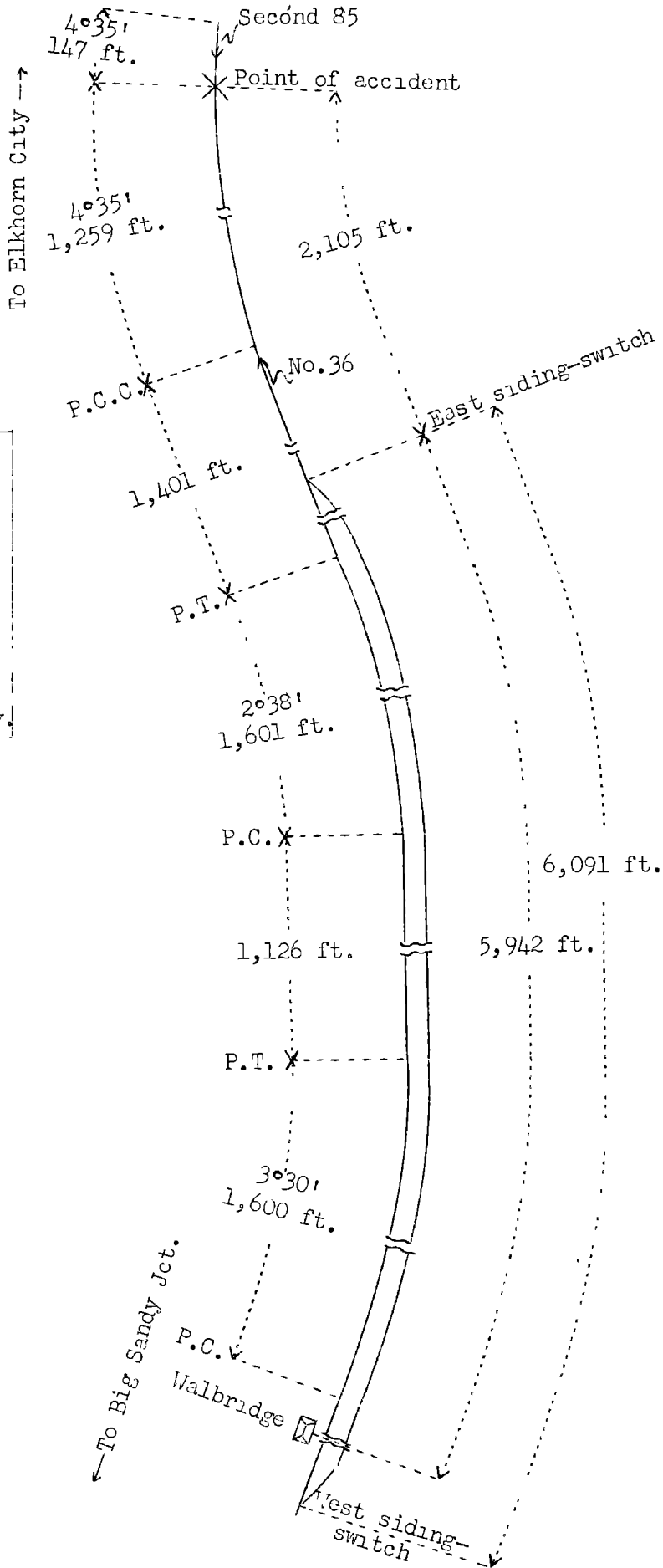
PATTERSON, Chairman:

On August 30, 1944, there was a head-end collision between a freight train and a passenger train on the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway near Walbridge, Ky., which resulted in the death of 1 maintenance-of-way employee, and the injury of 68 passengers, 3 railway-mail clerks, 2 railway-express messengers and 2 train-service employees.

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<sup>1</sup>Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Chairman Patterson for consideration and disposition.

- |   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| o | Elkhorn City, Ky.   |
|   | 95.20 mi.           |
| o | Chapman             |
|   | 3.78 mi.            |
| X | Point of accident   |
|   | 1.52 mi.            |
| o | Walbridge           |
|   | 2.80 mi.            |
| o | Louisa              |
|   | 24.90 mi.           |
| o | Big Sandy Jct., Ky. |



Inv. No. 2822  
 Chesapeake and Ohio Railway  
 Walbridge, Ky.  
 August 30, 1944

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Ashland Division designated as the Big Sandy Sub-division and extending eastward from Big Sandy Jct. to Elkhorn City, Ky., 128.2 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this was a single-track line over which trains were operated by timetable, train orders and a manual-block system. At Walbridge, 27.7 miles east of Big Sandy Jct., a siding 6,091 feet long paralleled the main track on the south. The east switch of the siding was 5,942 feet east of the station. The accident occurred on the main track 2,105 feet east of the east siding-switch. From the west there were, in succession, a 3°30' curve to the left 1,600 feet in length, a tangent 1,126 feet, a 2°38' curve to the left 1,601 feet, a tangent 1,401 feet and a compound curve to the right, the maximum curvature of which was 4°35', 1,259 feet to the point of accident and 147 feet beyond. The grade for east-bound trains varied between 0.18 percent and 0.38 percent descending 4,425 feet to the point of accident, and was 0.18 percent descending at this point.

Rules for the government of the operating department read as follows:

DEFINITIONS

\* \* \*

Restricted Speed.--Proceed prepared to stop short of train, obstruction, or anything that may require the speed of a train to be reduced.

11 (a). A train finding a fusee burning red on or near its track must stop and extinguish the fusee, and then proceed at restricted speed.

\* \* \*

Note.--Passenger trains, after stopping, may proceed without extinguishing red fusee. \* \* \*

\* \* \*

15 (a). The explosion of two torpedoes is a signal to proceed at restricted speed. The explosion of one torpedo will indicate the same as two, but the use of two is required. \* \* \*

\* \* \*

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.

S-72. Trains of the first class are superior to those of the second; trains of the second class are superior to those of the third; and so on.

\* \* \*

S-87. An inferior train must keep out of the way of opposing superior trains and failing to clear the main track by the time required by rule must be protected as prescribed by Rule 99 (a).

\* \* \*

S-89. At meeting points between trains of different classes the inferior train must take the siding and clear the superior train not less than five minutes, \* \* \*

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. When recalled and safety to the train will permit, he may return.

\* \* \*

The front of the train must be protected in the same way when necessary by the front brakeman or fireman.

\* \* \*

When day signals cannot be plainly seen, owing to weather or other conditions, night signals must also be used. Conductors and enginemen are responsible for the protection of their trains.

317-C (a). When trains, authorized by \* \* \*  
 time table authority to meet or are expected to  
 meet opposing trains at a point intermediate to  
 open block stations, the block signal at each  
 station controlling the block will be displayed  
 at "stop," and the operator will, when authorized  
 by the train dispatcher, deliver Clearance Form  
 B (a) \* \* \*

\* \* \*

Clearance Form B (a) read in part as follows:

Clearance Form B (a)

.....M.....19....

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C & E ( Train ) at.....  
 ( on.....track) .....Block Station:

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\* \* \*

WHEN PROPERLY FILLED OUT AND SIGNED BY OPERATOR THIS FORM  
 IS AUTHORITY TO PASS STOP SIGNAL AND PROCEED AS SHOWN UNDER  
 .....BELOW:

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1	Proceed, meeting .....in block .....in block .....in block  (For Manual Block when meeting point * * * Rule 317-C(a)).
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\* \* \*

.....  
 Operator

The block involved extended between Louisa, 2.8 miles west  
 of Walbridge, and Chapman, 5.3 miles east of Walbridge.

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

### Description of Accident

Second 85, a west-bound fourth-class freight train, consisted of engine 1342, 113 cars and a caboose. At Chapman, the last open office, the crew of this train received a clearance Form B (a) authorizing their train to proceed from Chapman to Louisa on its time-table authority after the arrival of an east-bound freight train. Second 85 departed from Chapman at 7:22 a. m., 6 hours 47 minutes late, and stopped on the main track, with the front end of the engine standing 2,105 feet east of the east siding-switch at Walbridge, at 7:41 a. m. About 24 minutes later Second 85 was struck by No. 36.

No. 36, an east-bound second-class passenger train, consisted of engine 439, two mail-express cars, one express car and four coaches, in the order named. All cars were of steel construction. At Louisa, the last open office, the crew received a clearance Form B (a) authorizing their train to proceed from Louisa to Chapman on its time-table authority but requiring it to meet Second 85 in the block. No train order establishing a meeting point between No. 36 and Second 85 was issued. No. 36 departed from Louisa at 7:58 a. m., 16 minutes late, passed the east siding-switch at Walbridge, and while moving at an estimated speed of 30 miles per hour it collided with Second 85.

The engines of both trains were derailed and badly damaged. The first car of No. 36 was slightly damaged.

There was a dense fog at the time of the accident, which occurred at 8:05 a. m.

The engineer and the fireman of No. 36 were injured.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 21.2 trains.

### Discussion

The rules governing operation on this line provide that an inferior train must keep out of the way of opposing superior trains, and an inferior train must clear the time of opposing superior trains not less than 5 minutes. If an inferior train fails to clear the time of an opposing superior train, flag protection must be provided. In manual-block territory a train authorized by its time-table authority to proceed may be admitted to a block which is occupied by an opposing train, under authority of a clearance form. A train admitted to a block under this authority may proceed at maximum authorized speed throughout the block, but will expect to meet an opposing train at an intermediate siding. The explosion of two torpedoes requires the speed of a train to be so controlled that it can be stopped short of a train or an obstruction.



The siding at Walbridge was the only siding intermediate to the open block offices at Chapman and Louisa. Second 85 was inferior by class, and was required to be into clear at Walbridge not later than 7:44 a. m., if it proceeded to that station for No. 36. Second 85 entered the block at Chapman at 7:22 a. m., under a proceed block authority, and stopped at a point about 2,100 feet east of the east siding-switch at Walbridge at 7:41 a. m. Because Second 85 was a full-tonnage train, the front brakeman was instructed to proceed westward to stop No. 36 at Walbridge, and to instruct the crew of No. 36 to place their train on the siding so that Second 85 could proceed on the main track. The front brakeman said that he proceeded to a point about 3,500 feet west of the east siding-switch and placed two torpedoes on the south rail. Then he proceeded eastward a distance of about 1,400 feet, and was giving stop signals with a lighted red fusee when No. 36 passed him. The enginemen of Second 85 were on the engine, and when they saw the reflection of a headlight about 600 feet distant they became aware that No. 36 had not been stopped at Walbridge. The conductor of Second 85 was proceeding toward the front end of his train when the accident occurred.

No. 36 was admitted to the block at Louisa, under authority of a clearance form, 36 minutes after Second 85 was admitted to this block at Chapman. No train order restricting the authority of No. 36 to proceed from Louisa to Chapman with respect to Second 85 was issued. Under the rules, the block authority permitted No. 36 to proceed from Louisa to Chapman expecting to meet Second 85 in the block, but it did not establish Walbridge as the meeting point between these trains or restrict the authority of No. 36 at Walbridge with respect to Second 85. As No. 36 was approaching Walbridge the speed was about 25 miles per hour. Because of a dense fog, visibility was restricted to a few hundred feet. The headlight was lighted brightly, and the enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead. When the engine reached a point about 3,500 feet west of the east siding-switch two torpedoes were exploded, and the engineer made a service brake-pipe reduction. From this point eastward to the east siding-switch the speed of No. 36 was reduced to about 20 miles per hour, and the enginemen were prepared to stop the train if flagman's signals were seen, but the enginemen did not see any flagman's signals. Since Second 85 was not on the siding at Walbridge and since there was no siding between Walbridge and Chapman, they thought the portion of the block between these stations was clear, and they permitted their train to proceed. They first became aware that Second 85 was occupying the main track when they saw the reflection of a headlight a few hundred feet distant. Then the engineer moved the brake valve to emergency position, but the collision occurred before the brakes became effective.

Under the manual-block rules in effect in this territory, opposing movements within a block are authorized by the issuance of a clearance form which contains information that trains are to meet within the block. The clearance form does not specify at what siding intermediate to open block offices the opposing trains are to meet and does not restrict the authority of the superior train to proceed if the inferior train has not arrived at an intermediate siding. In the case under discussion, the crew of the superior train had only indefinite information as to the movement of the inferior train, and the crew of the inferior train had no information concerning the movement of the superior train other than the schedule in the timetable, although the superior train was about 16 minutes late on its schedule at Louisa. It was a long-standing practice on this line for a heavy freight train, such as the inferior train, to hold without train-order authority the main track at a meeting point with a passenger train, and the crew of the inferior train was following the practice in this case. The weather was extremely foggy, there was no train order issued to establish a meeting point between the trains, and the manual-block system in use provided no protection for the movement of these trains. Under these conditions the only protection afforded in this case was flagging signals given by a member of the crew of the inferior train, and the flagging signals were not seen by the crew of the passenger train. If an adequate block system had been in use in this territory, these opposing trains would not have been permitted to occupy the same block simultaneously, and this accident would not have occurred.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure of the railroad to provide adequate safeguards for the movement of trains.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway Company establish an adequate block system on the line on which this accident occurred.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-fifth day of September, 1944.

By the Commission, Chairman Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,  
Secretary.