

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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REPORT NO. 3700

THE CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO RAILWAY COMPANY  
IN RE ACCIDENT  
NEAR WHITE CLOUD, MICH., ON  
JUNE 28, 1956

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## SUMMARY

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Date: June 28, 1956

Railroad: Chesapeake and Ohio

Location: White Cloud, Mich.

Kind of accident: Collision

Trains involved: Maintenance-of-way : Freight  
service train

Train numbers: Work Extra 5719 : Extra 5937 South

Locomotive numbers: Diesel-electric : Diesel-electric  
unit 5719 unit 5937

Consists: 4 cars, caboose : 19 cars, caboose

Speeds: Standing : 35 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and train orders

Track: Single; 1°00' curve, 0.77 percent  
ascending grade northward

Weather: Clear

Time: 2:40 p. m.

Casualties: 5 injured

Cause: Failure properly to control the speed  
of a train within the working limits  
of another train after having been  
flagged by a brakeman of that train

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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REPORT NO. 3700

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 7, 1956

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Accident near White Cloud, Mich., on June 28, 1956, caused by failure properly to control the speed of a train within the working limits of another train after having been flagged by a brakeman of that train.

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

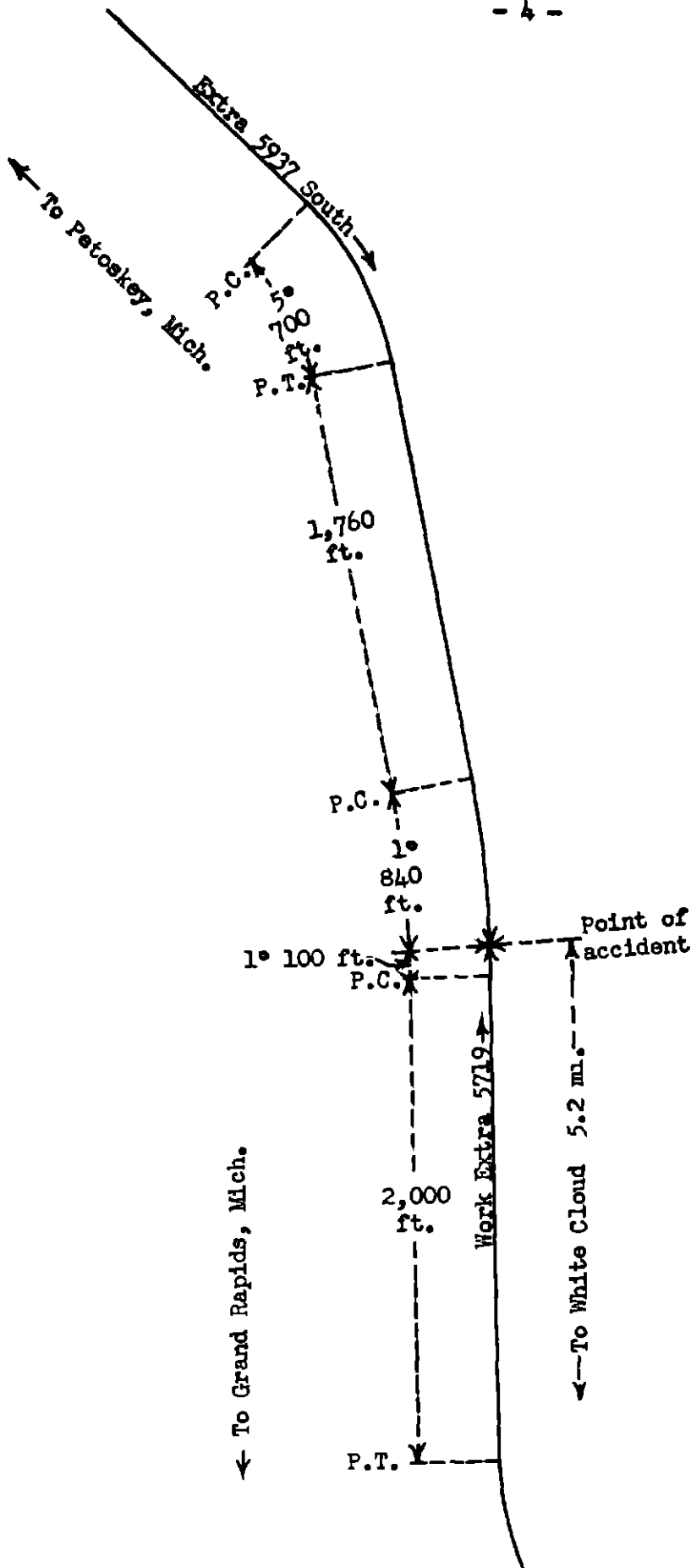
CLARKE, Commissioner:

On June 28, 1956, there was a collision between a maintenance-of-way service train and a freight train on the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway near White Cloud, Mich., which resulted in the injury of five train-service employees.

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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 Clarke for consideration and disposition.



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|---|---------------------|-----------|
| ● | Petoskey, Mich.     | 174.9 mi. |
| ● | Baldwin             | 10.5 mi.  |
| ● | Bitely              | 10.9 mi.  |
| X | Point of accident   | 5.2 mi.   |
| ● | White Cloud         | 47.2 mi.  |
| ● | Grand Rapids, Mich. |           |

Report No. 3700  
 Chesapeake and Ohio Railway  
 Near White Cloud, Mich.  
 June 28, 1956

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Grand Rapids Division extending between Grand Rapids and Petoskey, Mich., 248.7 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 at a point 52.4 miles north of Grand Rapids and 5.2 miles north of White Cloud. From the south there is a tangent 2,000 feet in length and a 1°00' curve to the left 100 feet to the point of accident and 840 feet northward. From the north there are, in succession, a 5°00' curve to the right 700 feet in length, a tangent 1,760 feet, and the curve on which the accident occurred. The grade is 0.77 percent ascending northward at the point of accident.

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

DEFINITIONS

Extra Train--A train not authorized by a time-table schedule. It may be designated as--

Extra--For any extra train except passenger extra or work extra;

Passenger Extra--For passenger train extra;

Work Extra--For work train extra.

99 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 fuseses. \* \* \*

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

\* \* \*

FORMS OF TRAIN ORDERS

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Work Extra

(1) Eng 85 works six forty five 6:45 A.M. until five forty five 5:45 P.M. between D and E.

The work extra must, whether standing or moving, protect itself against extra trains within the working limits in both directions as prescribed by the rules.  
\* \* \*

886 Engineman must promptly acknowledge signals, and must not pass a flagman until they have ascertained the reason for being flagged.

\* \* \*

The maximum authorized speed for freight trains in the vicinity of the point of accident is 40 miles per hour.

#### Description of Accident

Work Extra 5719, a maintenance-of-way service train, consisted, from north to south, of Diesel-electric unit 5719, four cars, and a caboose. At White Cloud members of the crew received copies of train order No. 318 reading in part as follows:

\* \* \* Eng. 5719 works one ten 1 10 PM until seven thirty 7 30 PM between White Cloud and Bitely. Southward extras wait at Bitely until two twenty 2 20 PM. Northward extras wait at White Cloud until seven thirty 7 30 PM \* \* \*

Bitely is 16.1 miles north of White Cloud. This train departed north-bound from White Cloud about 1:30 p. m. and stopped at various points to permit maintenance-of-way employees to unload rail. While it was standing at a point 5.2 miles north of White Cloud the locomotive was struck by Extra 5937 South.

Extra 5937 South, a south-bound freight train, consisted of Diesel-electric unit 5937, 19 cars, and a caboose. At Baldwin, 26.6 miles north of White Cloud and the last open office, members of the crew received copies of train order No. 318. This train departed from Baldwin at 2 p. m. and stopped in the vicinity of the north siding-switch at Bitely in response to signals given by the front brakeman of Work Extra 5719. It departed from Bitely about 2:22 p. m., and while moving at a speed of approximately 35 miles per hour it struck Work Extra 5719.

Work Extra 5719 was moved southward a distance of 338 feet by the force of the impact. The caboose of this train was overturned, and the rear truck of the fourth car was derailed. The locomotive was badly damaged, the third car was destroyed, and the other cars and the caboose were somewhat damaged. The second to the seventh cars, inclusive, and the front truck of the eighth car of Extra 5937 South were derailed. The locomotive was badly damaged, the second and third cars were destroyed, and the first car and the fourth to the eighth cars, inclusive, were somewhat damaged.

The flagman of Work Extra 5719, and the engineer, the fireman, the front brakeman, and the flagman of Extra 5937 South were injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 2:40 p. m.

#### Discussion

Before train order No. 318 was issued, the crew of Work Extra 5719 held copies of a train order authorizing their locomotive to work extra within the working limits specified in order No. 318. The train order which they held during the forenoon provided that southward extras would wait at Bitely until 2:10 p. m. About 11:30 a. m. the conductor arranged to send the front brakeman to Bitely in an automobile. He instructed the front brakeman to stop all south-bound trains after 2:10 p. m. and to direct the engineer of any train which departed after 2:10 p. m. to approach Work Extra 5719 under control and to expect the work extra to precede him to White Cloud and clear the main track at that point.

Extra 5937 South stopped at Bitely about 2:16 p. m. in response to stop signals given by the front brakeman of Work Extra 5719. The front brakeman of Work Extra 5719 said that he boarded the locomotive and informed the engineer that the employees with the work extra were unloading rail and that Extra 5937 South was to proceed with caution. At this time the brakeman did not know the location of the work extra. He said that he then alighted from the locomotive and that the front brakeman of Extra 5937 South, who had talked with the train dispatcher on the telephone, then told him that no other south-bound train would reach Bitely before 8 p. m. and inquired whether he desired to ride to the location of the work extra. The front brakeman of Work Extra 5719 went to the telephone to call the train dispatcher. Extra 5937 South departed before he returned.

When Extra 5937 South arrived at Bitely the enginemen and the front brakeman were on the locomotive. The conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. The front brakeman said that when the train stopped, the front brakeman of Work Extra 5719 boarded the locomotive and informed the engineer that the work extra was south of Bitely. The fireman said that he did not hear this conversation. The engineer said that he could not remember afterward that he had received any definite instructions from the front brakeman of the work extra. While Extra 5937 South was standing at Bitely the front brakeman called the train dispatcher on the telephone. He said that the dispatcher told him to inform the front brakeman of Work Extra 5719 that it would not be necessary for him to stop any other south-bound trains. The front brakeman gave this information to the front brakeman of the work extra, and then boarded the locomotive and gave the same information to the enginemen. The engineer said he interpreted this information as indicating that the work extra was clear of the main track, and that the conductor of the work extra, through the train dispatcher, had instructed his front brakeman that further protection was unnecessary. The enginemen said that after their train departed from Bitely they had some further discussion as to the instructions which had been given to the brakeman of the work extra. The fireman and the front brakeman said afterward that they expected they might find the work extra occupying the main track and they thought the engineer had the same understanding. The engineer said that he expected the work extra to be clear of the main track. Because of curvature of the track and vegetation west of the track, the employees on the locomotive were unable to see Work Extra 5719 until their locomotive reached a point about 1,350 feet north of the locomotive of that train. When they saw the work extra the engineer immediately made an emergency application of the brakes and sounded a warning on the pneumatic horn. According to the tape of the speed-recording device, the speed of the train was approximately 50 miles per hour at the time the brakes were applied, and approximately 35 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

Before the accident occurred the enginemen and the conductor of Work Extra 5719 were in the control compartment of the locomotive. The flagman was in the caboose. The employees on the locomotive said that after they saw Extra 5937 South approaching there was insufficient time to move their train or to provide additional protection. The conductor said that when providing flag protection for the movement of a work extra it was customary to station the flagman or brakeman at the entrance to the working limits.



The train dispatcher said that during his conversation with the front brakeman of Extra 5937 South there was no mention of any train which might be following Extra 5937 South nor of the action to be taken by the front brakeman of Work Extra 5719. He said that after Extra 5937 South departed from Bitely the front brakeman of Work Extra 5719 called him, and at that time he told the brakeman that he did not expect another south-bound train to reach Bitely until after 8 p. m. He said that this subject had not been mentioned previously.

The statements of the employees involved were conflicting as to the conversations which took place while Extra 5937 South was standing at Bitely. The employees who were at Bitely were in agreement, however, that as a result of his conversation with the train dispatcher the front brakeman of Extra 5937 South gained the impression that it would not be necessary for the front brakeman of Work Extra 5719 to stop any other trains. The engineer of Extra 5937 South then accepted this information as indicating that the brakeman had been relieved from providing protection for Work Extra 5719 and that the work extra was no longer occupying the main track. The front brakeman of Work Extra 5719 first entered service as a brakeman 4 days before the accident occurred. He had had no previous experience in train service. It is possible that a more experienced employee might have given the engineer of Extra 5937 South more positive instructions. However, the rules provide that a train must not pass a flagman until the engineman has ascertained the reason for being flagged, and in the instant case the engineer of Extra 5937 South accepted information obtained from other sources as modifying any instructions which the front brakeman of Work Extra 5719 may have had.

Under the provisions of train order No. 318, as interpreted by officials of the carrier, the crew of Work Extra 5719 was not required to provide protection against southward extra trains before 2:20 p. m. and was not required to provide protection against northward extra trains before 7:30 p. m. According to this interpretation, the word "extras" as used in the order included all extra trains. While this interpretation was not involved in this accident, it is not in accordance with the wording of the definitions in the operating rules of the carrier. According to these definitions an extra train may be designated as extra, passenger extra, or work extra. The word "extra" is used only to designate an extra train other than a passenger extra or a work extra.

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Cause

This accident was caused by failure properly to control the speed of a train within the working limits of another train after having been flagged by a brakeman of that train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this seventh day of September, 1956.

By the Commission, Commissioner Clarke.

(SEAL)

HAROLD D. McCOY,  
Secretary.