

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 3236
CHICAGO AND NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR DEERBROCK, WIS., ON
MARCH 3, 1949

SUMMARY

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Railroad: Chicago and North Western

Location: Deerbrook, Wis.

Date: March 3, 1949

Kind of accident: Rear-end collision

Trains involved: Freight : Freight

Train numbers: 56 : 282

Engine numbers: 1071 : 2544

Consists: 29 cars, cabooses : 31 cars,
cabooses

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

Operation: Timetable and train orders

Track: Single, 1° curve; 0.33 percent
descending grade eastward

Weather: Misting

Time: 7:30 p. m.

Casualties: 1 killed

Cause: Failure to provide protection
for preceding train

Recommendation: That the Chicago and North Western
Railway Company install an adequate
block system on line on which
accident occurred

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 3236

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

CHICAGO AND NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY COMPANY

April 15, 1949

Accident near Deerbrook, Wis., on March 3, 1949, caused
by failure to provide protection for the preceding
train.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

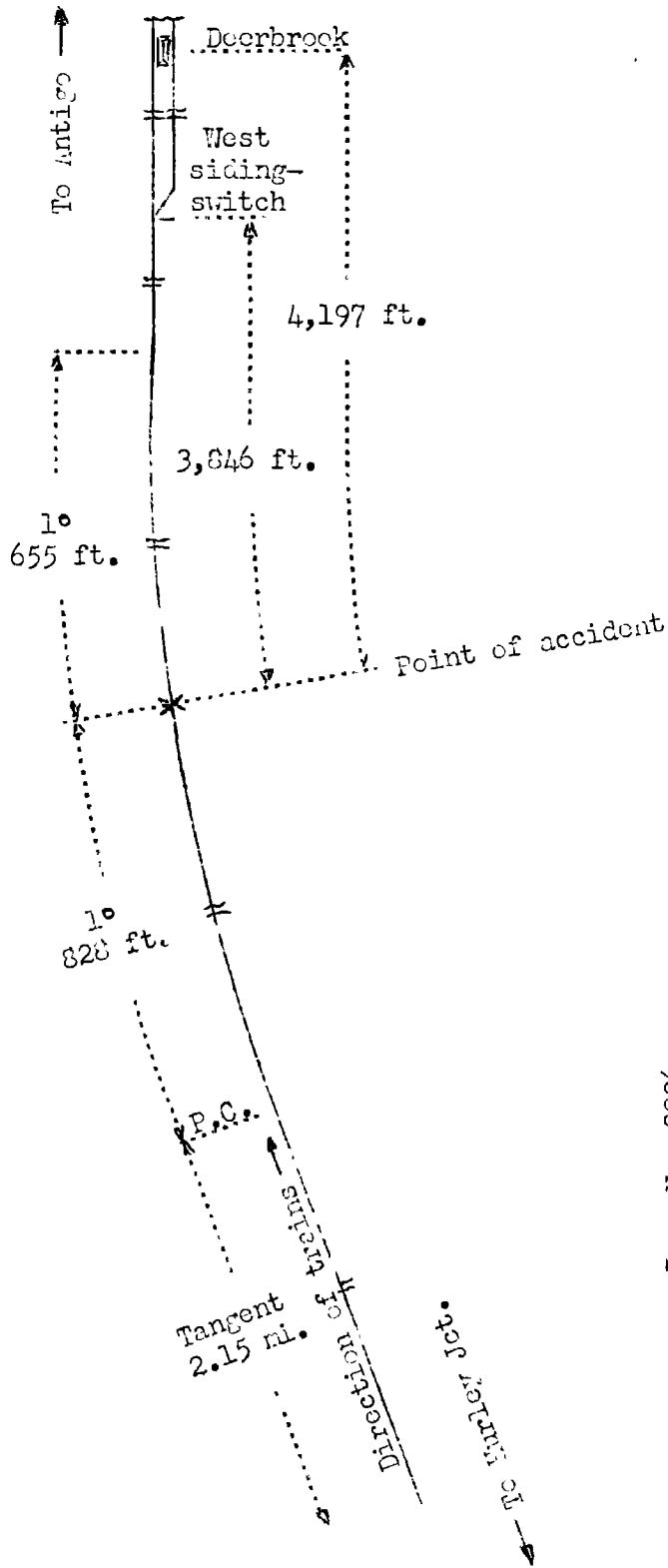
PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On March 3, 1949, there was a rear-end collision
between two freight trains on the Chicago and North Western
Railway near Deerbrook, Wis., which resulted in the death
of one employee.

1

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

o	Antigo, Wis.	
	6.10 mi.	
o	Deerbrook	
	0.79 mi.	
X	Point of accident	
	10.01 mi.	
o	Surrit Lake	
	10.00 mi.	
o	Pelican Lake	
	5.60 mi.	
o	Monico	
	63.00 mi.	
o	Hurley Jct., Wis.	



Inv. No. 3236
 Chicago and North Western Railway
 Deerbrook, Wis.
 March 3, 1949

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Ashland Division extending between Hurley Jct. and Antigo, Wis., 120.5 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 113.61 miles east of Hurley Jct. and 4,197 feet west of the station at Deerbrook. From the west there are, in succession, a tangent 2.15 miles in length and a 1° curve to the right 828 feet to the point of accident and 655 feet eastward. The grade is 0.33 percent descending eastward at the point of accident.

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

19. The following signals will be displayed to the rear of every train, as markers, to indicate the rear of the train:

* * *

Rear of train by night * * *

Lights * * * as markers, showing * * * red to the rear.

35. The following signals will be used by flagmen:

* * *

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

S-72. * * * trains of the second class are superior to those of the third; * * *

* * *

85. * * *

* * * Third class trains may pass and run ahead of second class trains. * * *

* * *

91. Unless some form of block signals is used, the time space to be maintained between trains in the same direction will be regulated by special rule on each division time-table. This rule will not relieve trainmen from observing all rules in regard to the protection of their trains.

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. * * *

* * *

99a. When a flagman goes back to protect a train at night, or in obscure weather, he will place a lighted fusee in the center of the track five hundred feet back of the rear of the train, and proceed back until proper distance is reached to insure full protection.

* * *

Timetable special instructions read in part as follows:

* * * Trains will be spaced 15 minutes apart, * * *

The maximum authorized speed for freight trains is 35 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

No. 56, an east-bound third-class freight train, consisting of engine 1071, 29 cars and a caboose, departed from Monico, the last open office, 26.4 miles west of Deerbrook, at 5:25 p. m., 5 hours 35 minutes late. It stopped on the main track near Deerbrook about 6:57 p. m., with the rear end standing 4,197 feet west of the station and 3,846 feet west of the west siding-switch. About 33 minutes later the rear end of this train was struck by No. 282.

No. 282, an east-bound second-class freight train, consisting of engine 2544, 31 cars and a caboose, departed from Monico at 6:05 p. m., 2 hours 50 minutes late, and while moving at a speed of about 10 miles per hour it struck the rear end of No. 56.

The rear truck of the last car of No. 56 was derailed. This car telescoped the caboose, which was destroyed by fire. The engine of No. 282 stopped with the front end about 25 feet east of the point of accident. It was not derailed, but it was slightly damaged.

The conductor of No. 56 was killed.

It was misting at the time of the accident, which occurred at 7:30 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 10.4 trains.

Discussion

About 33 minutes after No. 56, an east-bound third-class freight train, stopped on the main track west of the station at Deerbrook the rear end was struck by No. 282, an east-bound second-class freight train. No. 282 was superior to No. 56 by class. Under the rules of the carrier No. 56 was authorized to occupy the main track on the time of No. 282, but No. 56 was required to provide protection against following trains.

The crew of No. 56 went on duty at Watersmeet, Mich., 68.6 miles west of Deerbrook, at 9 a. m. The schedule of No. 56 was in effect on alternate week-days. Switching and station work were performed at several stations between Watersmeet and Monico, 42.2 miles. Monico is a junction where No. 56 enters that part of the Ashland Division extending between Hurley Jct. and Antigo. No. 56 arrived at Monico at 4:15 p. m. At that station, the crew received copies of train order No. 239, which contained the instruction that Extra 2592 West meet No. 56 at Pelican Lake and that Extra 2592 West had right over No. 282 Summit Lake to Monico. Summit Lake, Pelican Lake and Monico, are, respectively, 10.8 miles, 20.8 miles and 26.4 miles west of Deerbrook. The flagman said that he was instructed at Monico by the conductor to assist in switching operations at Summit Lake and at Deerbrook, and to ride on the engine between Summit Lake and Deerbrook in order to expedite the movement. The conductor informed the flagman that he would provide protection against following trains at those stations. The front brakeman said that the conductor instructed him at Monico that station work would be performed at Pelican Lake if Extra 2592 West was not into clear at that station upon their arrival, otherwise, a stop would not be made at Pelican Lake. He also heard the conductor instruct the flagman to assist the front brakeman

at Summit Lake and at Deerbrook and that protection at those stations would be provided by the conductor. No. 56 departed from Monico at 5:25 p. m. When this train arrived at Pelican Lake, Extra 2592 West was into clear. Therefore No. 56 did not stop at that station. No. 56 stopped at Summit Lake to do station work. From Summit Lake to Deerbrook the conductor was in the caboose and the flagman and the front brakeman were on the engine. No. 56 stopped at Deerbrook, with the caboose standing 3,846 feet west of the west siding-switch. The engineer said that he was informed by the flagman that the conductor would provide protection for the rear of the train at Deerbrook. It was an established practice to stop the train at this location primarily to avoid blocking street crossings. The engine was detached and all of the crew except the conductor rode on the engine to the station. The engine was coupled to a cut of three cars on an auxiliary track, then this movement proceeded westward on the main track with the engine in backward motion and pushing the cars. The engineer and the fireman were in the cab of the engine. The front brakeman was on the front end of the second car and the flagman was on the front end of the most westerly car, and both were on the south side. When the most westerly car had reached a point about 500 feet east of the east end of the rear portion of the train, both the flagman and the front brakeman observed the headlight of an approaching east-bound train. It appeared to be moving at slow speed, and they said they thought it had been flagged. The collision occurred before they reached the rear portion of their train.

The crew of No. 282 received copies of train order No. 239 at Monico. All of the members of the crew were aware that No. 56 was preceding their train. The engineer reduced the speed of the train through all stations between Monico and Deerbrook, because he expected to find the preceding train on the main track. Before the engine entered the tangent track west of Deerbrook, the engineer made a brake-pipe reduction, and the speed of the train was reduced to about 20 miles per hour. 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 headlight was lighted brightly. The brakes of this train had been tested and they had functioned properly when used en route. When the engine entered the tangent track the engineer did not see the preceding train or any flagging signals being given. He then released the brakes, and increased the speed to about 25 miles per hour. At a distance of about 700 feet the engineer of No. 282 observed the lighted marker lamps showing red on the rear of the caboose of No. 56. He placed the brake valve in the emergency position, placed the reverse

lever in position for backward motion, and opened the sander valve, but the collision occurred before the train could be stopped. All of the employees on the engine of No. 282 said that they did not see any stop signals being given and that no torpedoes were exploded by their engine. The conductor of No. 56, who was alone in the caboose, was killed in the accident, and it could not be determined why flag protection was not provided.

In this territory trains are operated by timetable and train orders only, and the only provision in effect for spacing following trains is by the time-interval method enforced by operators at open stations, and by flagman's signals. The rules require that a following train be spaced at least 15 minutes behind a preceding train. In this case No. 56 departed from Monico 40 minutes before No. 282 departed from that station, and at the time the following train departed from Monico all offices between that station and Deerbrook were closed. There was no train order issued restricting the movement of No. 282 with respect to No. 56, therefore, No. 282 was permitted to move at the maximum authorized speed of 35 miles per hour except through station limits. However, the accident occurred outside the station limits at Deerbrook. If an adequate block system had been in use in this territory, the crew of the following train would have received definite information that the preceding train was occupying the main track in the same block.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to provide protection for the preceding train.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Chicago and North Western Railway Company install an adequate block system on the line on which this accident occurred.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this fifteenth day of April, 1949.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.