

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 3185
CHICAGO AND NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR IRVINE, WYO., ON
MAY 28, 1948

SUMMARY

Railroad: Chicago and North Western
Date: May 28, 1948
Location: Irvine, Wyo.
Kind of accident: Head-end collision
Trains involved: Freight : Freight
Train numbers: 618 : 617
Engine numbers: 2332, 2317 : 2375, 2337
Consists: Caboose, 62 cars, : Caboose, 37
caboose cars, caboose
Estimated speeds: 5 m. p. h. : 3 m. p. h.
Operation: Timetable and train orders
Track: Single; tangent; 1.0 percent
ascending grade eastward
Weather: Cloudy
Time: About 3:50 a. m.
Casualties: 2 injured
Cause: Failure to obey right-of-track order
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. 3185

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

CHICAGO AND NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY COMPANY

July 12, 1948

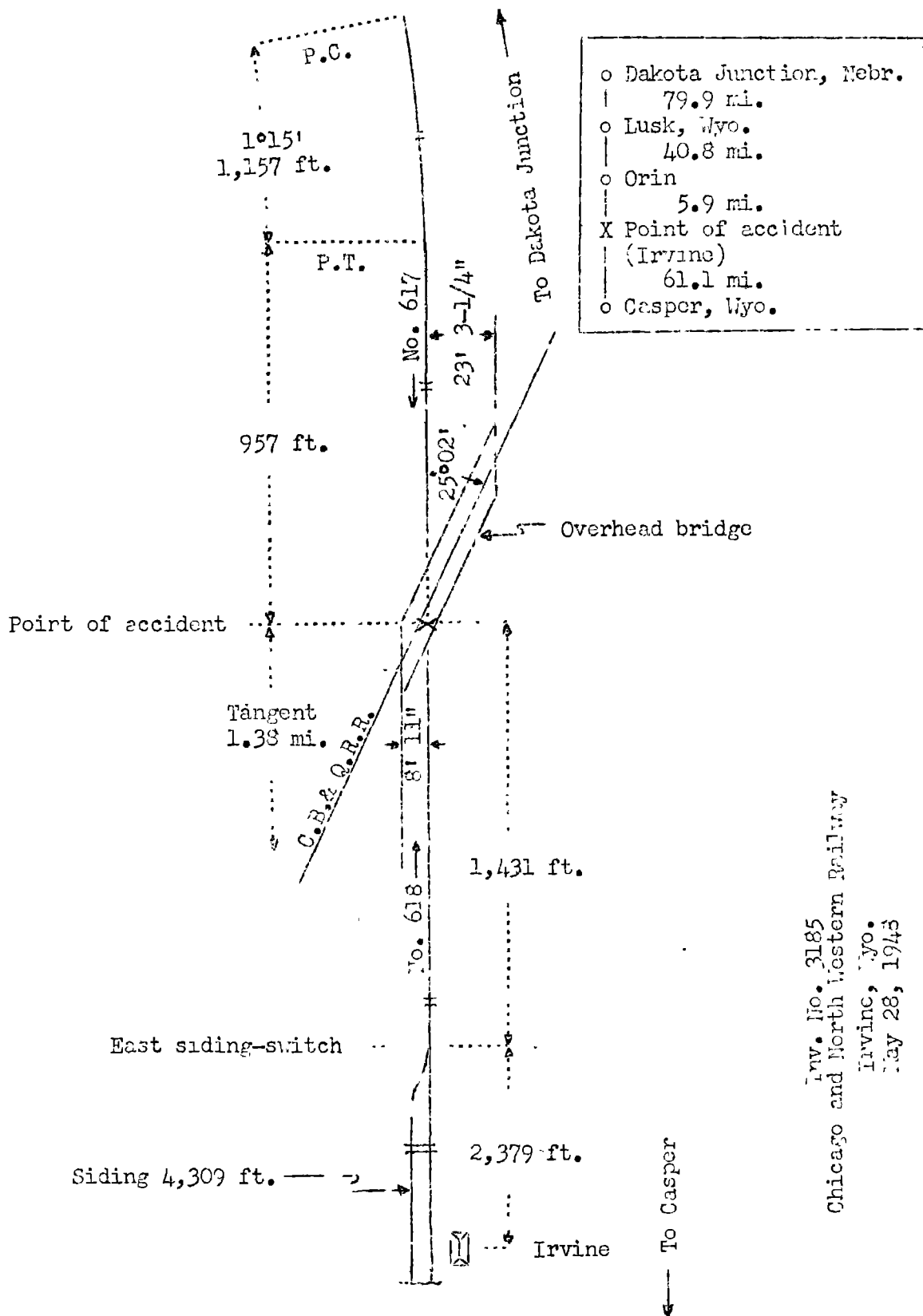
Accident near Irvine, Wyo., on May 28, 1948, caused by
failure to obey a right-of-track order.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On May 28, 1948, there was a head-end collision between two freight trains on the Chicago and North Western Railway near Irvine, Wyo., which resulted in the injury of two employees.

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.



- o Dakota Junction, Nebr. 79.9 mi.
- o Lusk, Wyo. 40.8 mi.
- o Orin 5.9 mi.
- X Point of accident (Irvine) 61.1 mi.
- o Casper, Wyo.

Inv. No. 3185
 Chicago and North Western Railway
 Irvine, Wyo.
 May 28, 1943

To Casper

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Black Hills Division extending between Casper, Wyo., and Dakota Junction, Febr., 187.7 miles, a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. At Irvine, 61.1 miles east of Casper, a siding 4,309 feet in length parallels the main track on the north. The east switch of this siding is 2,379 feet east of the station. The accident occurred on the main track 1,431 feet east of the east siding-switch. The main track is tangent throughout a distance of 1.38 miles immediately west of the point of accident and 957 feet eastward. From the east there are, in succession, a 1°15' curve to the right 1,157 feet in length and the tangent on which the accident occurred. The grade is 1.0 percent ascending eastward.

In the immediate vicinity of the point of accident a single-track bridge of a line of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad spans the line of the C.& N.W. at an angle of 25°02'. The bridge consists of a steel truss and concrete abutments. The bottom of the truss is 21 feet 7 inches above the level of the tops of the rails of the C.& N.W. main track. The inner faces of the south and the north abutments are, respectively, 23 feet 3 1/4 inches and 8 feet 11 inches from the centerline of the C.& N.W. main track.

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

S-71. A train is superior to another train by right, class or direction.

Right is conferred by train order; class and direction by time-table.

Right is superior to class or direction.

* * *

S-88. At meeting points between trains of the same class, the inferior train must clear the main track before the leaving time of the superior train.

* * *

S-90. * * *

Train must stop clear of the switch used by the train to be met in going on the siding.

* * *

211. * * *

* * *

Enginemen must show train orders to firemen and when practicable to forward trainmen. Conductors must show train orders when practicable to trainmen.

FORMS OF TRAIN ORDERS.

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* * *

S-C.

Giving Right Over an Opposing Train.

(1.) No 1 has right over No 2 G to X.

If the second-named train reaches the point last named before the other arrives, it may proceed, keeping clear of the opposing train as many minutes as such train was before required to clear it under the rules. * * *

* * *

In this territory the maximum authorized speeds are 50 miles per hour for passenger trains and 30 miles per hour for freight trains.

Description of Accident

At Casper the crew of No. 618, an east-bound second-class freight train, received copies of train order No. 112 reading as follows:

No 617 has right over
No 618 Lusk to Irvine

Lusk is 46.7 miles east of Irvine. No. 618, consisting of engines 2332 and 2317, a caboose, 62 cars and a caboose, in the order named, departed from Casper, the last open office, at 12:55 a. m., 4 hours 25 minutes late, passed the east

siding-switch at Irvine, where it was required to wait unless No. 617 was into clear on the siding, and while moving at an estimated speed of 5 miles per hour it collided with No. 617 at a point 1,431 feet east of the east siding-switch.

At Lusk the crew of No. 617, a west-bound second-class freight train, received copies of train order No. 112. This train, consisting of engines 2375 and 2337, a caboose, 37 cars and a caboose, in the order named, departed from Lusk at 12:10 a. m., 2 hours 20 minutes late, departed from Orin, the last open office, 5.9 miles east of Irvine, at 3:35 a. m., 3 hours 30 minutes late, and while it was moving at an estimated speed of 3 miles per hour it collided with No. 618.

The engine-truck wheels and the rear tender-truck wheels of the first engine of No. 618, the No. 2 pair of driving wheels of the second engine of No. 618, the caboose next to the second engine of each train and the first, second and thirty-fifth cars of No. 617 were derailed. The derailed equipment was more or less damaged.

The engineer and the fireman of the first engine of No. 617 were injured.

The weather was cloudy at the time of the accident, which occurred about 3:50 a. m.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement in this territory was 3.77 trains.

Discussion

The crews of both trains held copies of train order No. 112, which gave No. 617 right over No. 618 between Lusk and Irvine. No. 617 was due to leave Orin, the last siding east of Irvine, at 12:05 a. m. Under the rules, unless No. 618 could proceed to Orin and be clear of the main track at that station not later than 12:05 a. m., No. 618 was required to remain clear of the east siding-switch at Irvine until No. 617 had cleared on the siding at that station. No. 617 departed from Orin at 3:35 a. m. and No. 618 passed the east siding-switch at Irvine about 3:49 a. m., and these trains collided about 3:50 a. m. at a point 1,431 feet east of the east siding-switch at Irvine.

As No. 617 was approaching the east siding-switch at Irvine the headlight of the first engine was lighted brightly. The enginemen of both engines were maintaining a lookout ahead. The speed had been reduced to about 10 miles per hour preparing to enter the siding. Because of the overhead bridge the view of the track west of the bridge was materially restricted. The first the enginemen knew of anything being wrong was when the engineer of the first engine saw the reflection of the headlight of the approaching train a few hundred feet distant and he immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position, but the collision occurred before the train could be stopped.

The crew of No. 618 received copies of train order No. 112 at Casper about 3 hours 15 minutes prior to the time the accident occurred. At that time each member of the crew read the order. The engineer and the fireman of the first engine said that after the front brakeman handed them a copy of the order at Casper they read it and thought the order gave No. 617 right over No. 618 between Lusk and Orin, 5.9 miles east of Irvine. They did not again read the order, and were not aware that they had misread the order until after the accident had occurred. They first observed the reflection of the headlight of the first engine of No. 617 when their engine was in the vicinity of the east siding-switch at Irvine. At that time the speed of their train was about 25 miles per hour, and the engineer immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position, but the collision occurred before the train could be stopped. The enginemen of the second engine, the front brakeman and the flagman, who were in the caboose next to the second engine, and the conductor, who was in the rear caboose, understood that, under the provisions of train order No. 112, their train was required to remain clear of the east siding-switch at Irvine until No. 617 had been met. These employees said they thought the engineer of the first engine was preparing to take action to stop their train clear of the east siding-switch when a brake-pipe reduction was made in the vicinity of the west siding-switch. No action to stop the train was taken by any of these employees until after the front portion of the train had passed the east siding-switch, then the conductor opened the brake-valve on the rear caboose, but this action was not taken soon enough to prevent the collision. The brakes of No. 618 had been tested and had functioned properly en route.

This carrier's book of operating rules contains manual-block rules which provide for blocking of opposing and following movements, but these rules were not in effect in the territory involved. 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.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to obey a right-of-track order.

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 twelfth day of July, 1948.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.