

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2804
THE CHICAGO & NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR WAUSAU, WIS., ON
JUNE 14, 1944

SUMMARY

Railroad: Chicago & North Western
Date: June 14, 1944
Location: Wausau, Wis.
Kind of accident: Collision
Equipment involved: Freight train : Motor-truck
Train number: 169
Engine number: 2357
Consist: 24 cars, cabooses
Estimated speed: 25 m. p. h. : 5 m. p. h.
Operation: Timetable and train orders
Track: Single; tangent; 0.10 percent
descending grade westward
Highway: Tangent; crosses track at angle
of 86°30'; slightly ascending
grade northward
Weather: Clear
Time: 1:25 p. m.
Casualties: 2 killed; 1 injured
Cause: Motor-truck being driven upon
highway grade crossing immediately
in front of approaching train

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2804

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

THE CHICAGO & NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY COMPANY

July 11, 1944.

Accident near Wausau, Wis., on June 14, 1944, caused by
a motor-truck being driven upon a highway grade
crossing immediately in front of an approaching
train.

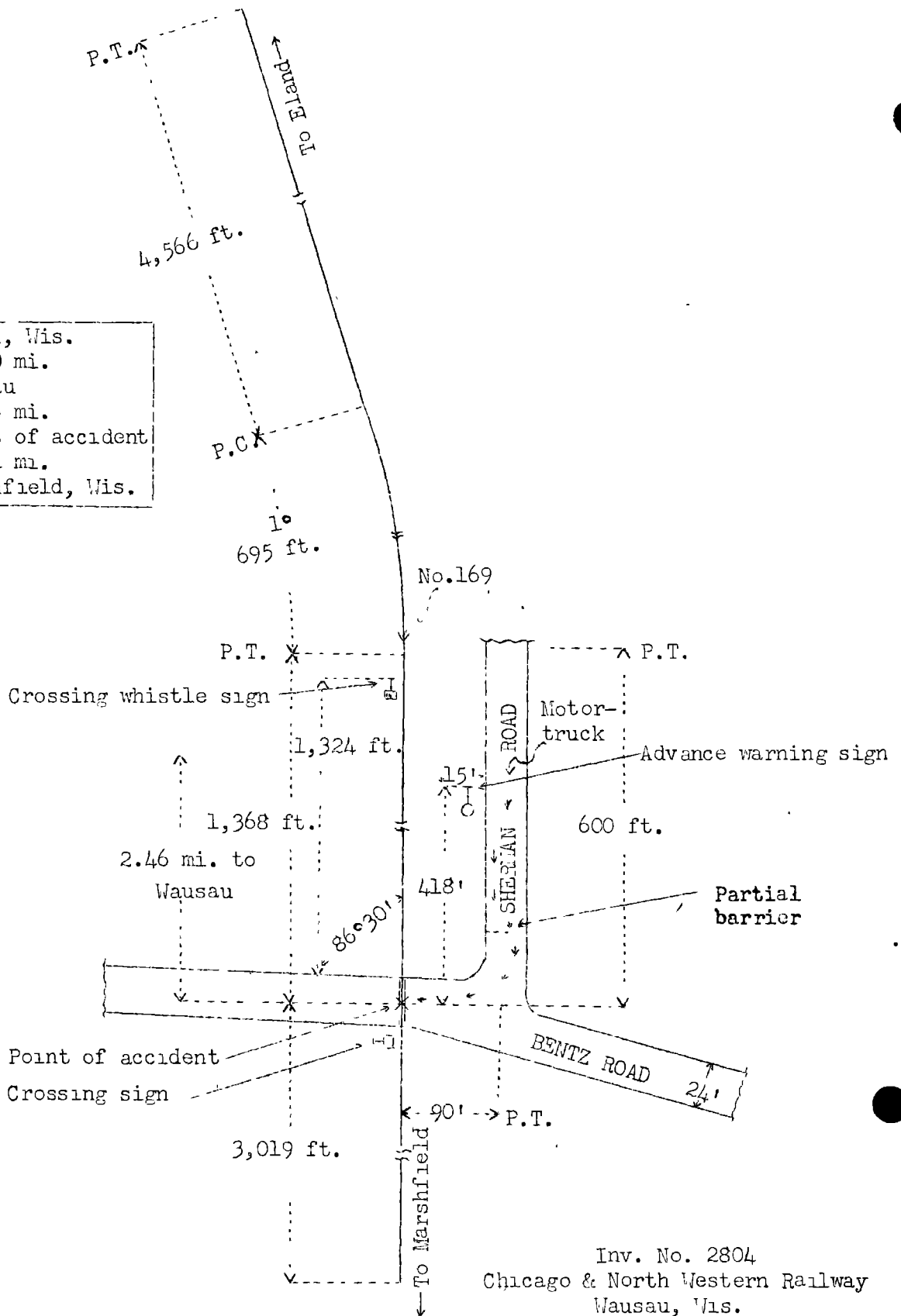
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Chairman:

On June 14, 1944, there was a collision between a
freight train on the Chicago & North Western Railway and
a motor-truck at a highway grade crossing near Wausau,
Wis., which resulted in the death of two employees and the
injury of one employee.

¹Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Com-
merce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the
Commission to Chairman Patterson for consideration and dis-
position.

- o Eland, Wis.
22.90 mi.
- o Wausau
2.46 mi.
- X Point of accident
38.24 mi.
- o Marshfield, Wis.



Inv. No. 2804
Chicago & North Western Railway
Wausau, Wis.
June 14, 1944

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Ashland Division designated as Subdivision 3 and extending westward from Eland to Marshfield, Wis., 63.6 miles. This was a single-track line over which trains were operated by timetable and train orders. There was no block system in use. The accident occurred on the main track 25.36 miles west of Eland, at a point 2.46 miles west of the station at Wausau, where the railroad was crossed at grade by Bentz Road. From the east on the railroad there were, in succession, a tangent 4,566 feet in length, a 1° curve to the right 695 feet and a tangent 1,368 feet to the crossing and 3,019 feet beyond. The grade for west-bound trains was 0.10 percent descending.

In the vicinity of the point of accident Sherman Road paralleled the railroad on the south, and at a point about 90 feet south of the grade crossing it intersected Bentz Road, which crossed the railroad at an angle of 86°30'. From the east on Sherman Road and thence northward on Bentz Road, there were, in succession, a tangent 600 feet to Bentz Road, a sharp curve to the right, and a tangent 90 feet to the crossing and some distance beyond. From the intersection to the crossing the grade for north-bound vehicles was slightly ascending. Bentz Road was surfaced with gravel, and was 24 feet wide. On the crossing steel guard rails were provided on the gage side of each rail. Planks 24 feet long and 10 inches wide were provided on the outside of each running rail and on the inside of each guard rail. Between the planks adjacent to the guard rails the crossing was surfaced with gravel.

An advance warning-sign was located 418 feet east of the crossing and 15 feet north of Sherman Road. This sign was a disc 24 inches in diameter mounted on a mast. It bore the letters "R R" in black on a yellow background. A crossing sign was located in the northwest angle of the crossing, 20 feet north of the track and 18 feet west of Bentz Road. This sign consisted of a rectangular board 2 feet 3 inches high and 5 feet 4 inches long mounted on a mast. It bore the words "LOOK OUT FOR THE CARS" in black letters on a white background. A crossing-whistle sign was located 1,324 feet east of the crossing.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

14. Engine Whistle Signals.

Note:--The signals prescribed are illustrated by "o" for short sounds; "___" for longer sounds. * * *

SOUND.

INDICATION.

* * *

(1) — — o o

Approaching public crossings at grade * * *. To be prolonged or repeated until crossing is reached. The first blast of the public crossing whistle must be given at the whistling post.

* * *

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

Description of Accident

No. 169, a west-bound second-class freight train, consisted of engine 2357, 24 cars and a caboose. This train departed from Wausau at 1:16 p. m., 4 hours 31 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 25 miles per hour it struck a motor-truck on a highway grade crossing and was derailed.

The vehicle involved was a motor-truck and a semi-trailer owned by the Marathon County Highway Department. The driver held Wisconsin operator's license No. 147818. The driver was accompanied by one person. The motor-truck was a 1937 F. W. D. Model M7, 20 feet long, and weighed 18,000 pounds. It was powered by a Diesel motor, and equipped with single tires on each wheel, hydraulic brakes, an enclosed steel cab, and a steel dump body 11 feet long, 8 feet wide and 21-1/2 inches high. The semi-trailer was of steel construction designed for the transportation of oversize lading, and weighed 12,000 pounds. It was of the flat-body type, 27 feet long, 9 feet wide and 2-1/2 feet above the ground, and was equipped with two rear axles and dual tires on each wheel. At the time of the accident the semi-trailer was loaded with a caterpillar tractor. The total weight of the motor-truck, semi-trailer and tractor was 56,000 pounds. The motor-truck bore Wisconsin license No. 4878, and the semi-trailer bore Wisconsin license No. 4912. This vehicle moved westward on Sherman Road, turned sharply to the right on Bentz Road and while moving northward at an estimated speed of 5 miles per hour it proceeded upon the crossing where the semi-trailer was struck by No. 169.

A west-bound train approaching on the railroad could be seen by the driver of a north-bound vehicle throughout a distance of about 1,350 feet. There was no unusual condition about the enclosed cab of the motor-truck that restricted the vision.

The semi-trailer was torn from the motor-truck and was carried in front of No. 169 a distance of 289 feet to the point where the train stopped. The engine and the first 7 cars were derailed and damaged.

It was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 1:25 p. m.

The engineer and the front brakeman were killed, and the fireman was injured.

Discussion

No. 169 was approaching the crossing at a speed of about 25 miles per hour in territory where the maximum authorized speed was 35 miles per hour. The front brakeman, who was on the engine, and the enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead. The whistle signal for the crossing was sounded in compliance with the rules. When the engine was about 300 feet east of the crossing the fireman saw the motor-truck proceeding upon the crossing, and he called a warning to the engineer. The engineer immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position, but the collision occurred before the brakes became effective.

The crossing was protected by a warning sign. A partial barrier had been placed on Sherman Road because a portion east of the crossing was not in condition for use by vehicular traffic. The driver of the motor-truck and the person with him in the cab when the accident occurred were employees of the Marathon County Highway Department. They said that just before the vehicle entered upon the crossing their attention was being given to the handling of the motor-truck and the semi-trailer around the barrier and turning into Bentz Road. The windows of the cab were open, but they did not see or hear the train approaching until the semi-trailer was on the crossing. Then they saw the engine of the approaching train about 300 feet distant. An attempt was made to increase the speed of the vehicle, but the accident occurred before the semi-trailer was clear of the crossing.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by a motor-truck being driven upon a highway grade crossing immediately in front of an approaching train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this eleventh day of July, 1944.

By the Commission, Chairman Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.