

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3317
CHICAGO AND NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY COMPANY
IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR WITTENBERG, WIS., ON
APRIL 14, 1950

SUMMARY

Date: April 14, 1950

Railroad: Chicago and North Western

Location: Wittenberg, Wis.

Kind of accident: Head-end collision

Trains involved: Engine : Passenger

Train numbers: Extra 2049 West : 116

Engine numbers: 2049 : 1629

Consist: . 3 cars

Estimated speeds: 10 m. p. h. 12 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and train orders

Track: Single; 2° curve; 0.27 percent ascending grade westward

Weather: Clear

Time: 1.10 p. m.

Casualties: 27 injured

Cause: Inferior train occupying main track on time of opposing superior train without flag protection

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3317

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

CHICAGO AND NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY COMPANY

May 17, 1950

Accident near Wittenberg, Wis., on April 14, 1950,
caused by an inferior train occupying the main
track on the time of an opposing superior train
without flag protection.

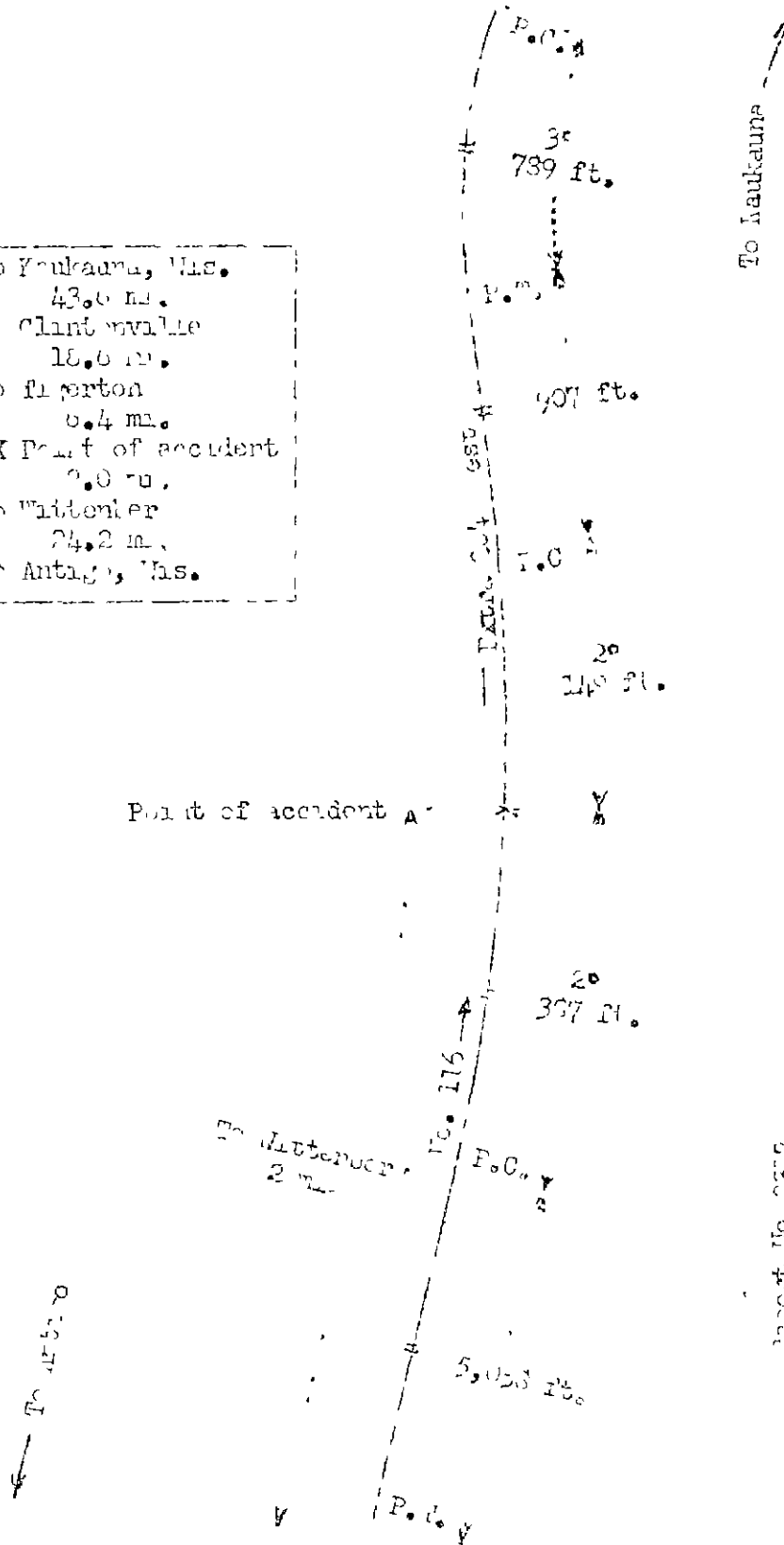
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On April 14, 1950, there was a head-end collision between an engine and a passenger train on the Chicago and North Western Railway near Wittenberg, Wis., which resulted in the injury of 20 passengers, 2 railway-mail clerks, 1 railway-express messenger and 4 train-service 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 Youkauna, Wis.	43.6 m.
o Clintonville	18.6 m.
o Wittenber	6.4 m.
X Point of accident	0.0 m.
o Wittenber	24.2 m.
o Antago, Wis.	



Report No. 2317
 Chicago and North Western Railway
 File No. 25, 118.
 April 14, 1950

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Ashland Division extending between Kaukauna and Antigo, Wis., 94.8 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 68.6 miles west of Kaukauna and 2 miles east of the station at Wittenberg. From the east there are, in succession, a 3° curve to the left 789 feet in length, a tangent 907 feet, and a 2° curve to the right 149 feet to the point of accident and 387 feet westward. From the west there is a tangent 5,058 feet in length and the curve on which the accident occurred. At the point of accident the grade is 0.27 percent ascending westward.

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

73. Extra trains are inferior to regular trains.

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.

Extra trains must clear the time of opposing regular trains not less than five minutes unless otherwise provided, * * *

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 * * *

* * *

The front of the train must be protected in the same way when necessary by a trainman, engineman or fireman.

* * *

719. * * *

When switch engines are run over the road their speed must not exceed 15 miles per hour

* * *

The maximum authorized speed for the passenger train was 55 miles per hour but it was restricted to 40 miles per hour in the vicinity of the point of accident. The maximum authorized speed for the engine was 15 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

Extra 2049 West consisted of engine 2049, a switch engine of the 0-6-0 type. This train departed from Kaukauna at 7.15 a. m., passed Tigerton, the last open office, 8.4 miles east of Wittenberg, at 12.50 p. m., and while moving at an estimated speed of 10 miles per hour it collided with No. 116.

No. 116, an east-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 1629, one rail car, one baggage car and one coach, in the order named. All cars were of all-steel construction. This train departed from Antigo, 24.2 miles west of Wittenberg, at 12.15 p. m., on time, departed from Wittenberg, the last open office, at 1.05 p. m., 7 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 12 miles per hour it collided with Extra 2049 West.

The engine and the cars of No. 116 remained coupled and stopped with the front end of the engine 153 feet east of the point of accident. The front pair of wheels of the engine truck was derailed to the south. The engine was considerably damaged. The second car was demolished and the third car was slightly damaged. After the collision occurred, engine 2049 moved eastward on the descending grade and stopped 4,746 feet east of the point of accident. It was badly damaged.

The engineer and the conductor of Extra 2049 West, and the baggageman and the brakeman of No. 116 were injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at 1.10 p. m.

Discussion

Under the rules of this carrier, the schedule time of an east-bound train at Tigerton, 8.4 miles east of Wittenberg, applies at the east switch of the siding. No. 116 was due to leave Wittenberg at 12.58 p. m., and to leave Tigerton at 1.14 p. m. Unless flag protection was provided as prescribed by rule No. 99, Extra 2049 West was required to be clear of the main track between Wittenberg and the east siding-switch at Tigerton not later

than 12 53 p. m. If it entered the siding at Tigerton at the east siding-switch, it was required to be clear of the main track not later than 1 09 p. m. No train order restricting the authority of No. 116 to proceed with respect to Extra 2049 West had been issued.

As No. 116 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 35 miles per hour. The enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead from their respective positions in the cab, and the members of the train crew were in various locations throughout the cars of the train. The brakes of the train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. After the train entered the curve on which the accident occurred, the fireman observed Extra 2049 West approaching and called a warning to the engineer. The engineer immediately closed the throttle and initiated an emergency brake application. The speed of the train was reduced to about 12 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

The crew of Extra 2049 West, which consisted of a conductor, an engineer, and a fireman, compared time at Kaukauna, and there was only a slight variation in their watches. This engine was restricted to a speed not exceeding 15 miles per hour. Extra 2049 West passed Tigerton at 12 50 p. m. There was no auxiliary track between Tigerton and Wittenberg at which Extra 2049 West could clear the main track. When this train was in the vicinity of Tigerton, the engineer consulted the timetable to determine the schedule time of No. 116 at Wittenberg. He said he read the schedule time as 1:14 p. m., and so informed the conductor and the fireman. However, this was the schedule time of No. 116 at Tigerton. The engineer said he thought he could clear No. 116 at Wittenberg not later than 1:10 p. m. by exceeding the speed restriction. Neither the conductor nor the fireman consulted a timetable and they did not detect the error. A short time later the fireman informed the conductor that they should have cleared No. 116 at Tigerton, otherwise it would be necessary to exceed the speed restriction of 15 miles per hour to clear No. 116 at Wittenberg. Neither the conductor nor the fireman called this to the engineer's attention.

As Extra 2049 West was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 20 miles per hour. The engineer was maintaining a lookout ahead from the right side of the cab, the conductor was seated on the fireman's side of the engine, and the fireman was on the deck tending the fire. The brakes of the engine had

been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. The engineer first observed No. 116 when it was about 1,200 feet distant. He immediately closed the throttle, initiated an emergency brake application, and sounded a warning on the engine whistle. He then placed the reverse gear in position for backward motion and opened the throttle. The speed of the train was reduced to about 10 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by an inferior train occupying the main track on the time of an opposing superior train without flag protection.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this seventeenth day of May, 1950.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.