

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3609
CHICAGO, BURLINGTON & QUINCY
RAILROAD COMPANY
IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR ANSLEY, NEBR., ON
JANUARY 13, 1955

SUMMARY

Date: January 13, 1955

Railroad: Chicago, Burlington & Quincy

Location: Ansley, Nebr.

Kind of accident: Collision

Equipment involved: Freight train · Motor-truck and trailer

Train number: Extra 108A West ·

Engine number: Diesel-electric :
units 108A, 108B,
108C, and 108D

Consist: 77 cars, caboose :

Estimated speeds: 50 m. p. h. · Undetermined

Operation: Signal indications

Track: Single, 2°06' curve; 0.38 percent ascending grade westward

Highway: Tangent; crosses track at angle of 90°; 6.0 percent ascending grade northward

Weather: Clear

Time: 9 16 a. m.

Casualties: 1 killed; 3 injured

Cause: Motor-truck and trailer occupying rail-highway grade crossing immediately in front of approaching train

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3609

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

CHICAGO, BURLINGTON & QUINCY RAILROAD COMPANY

February 24, 1955

127-B

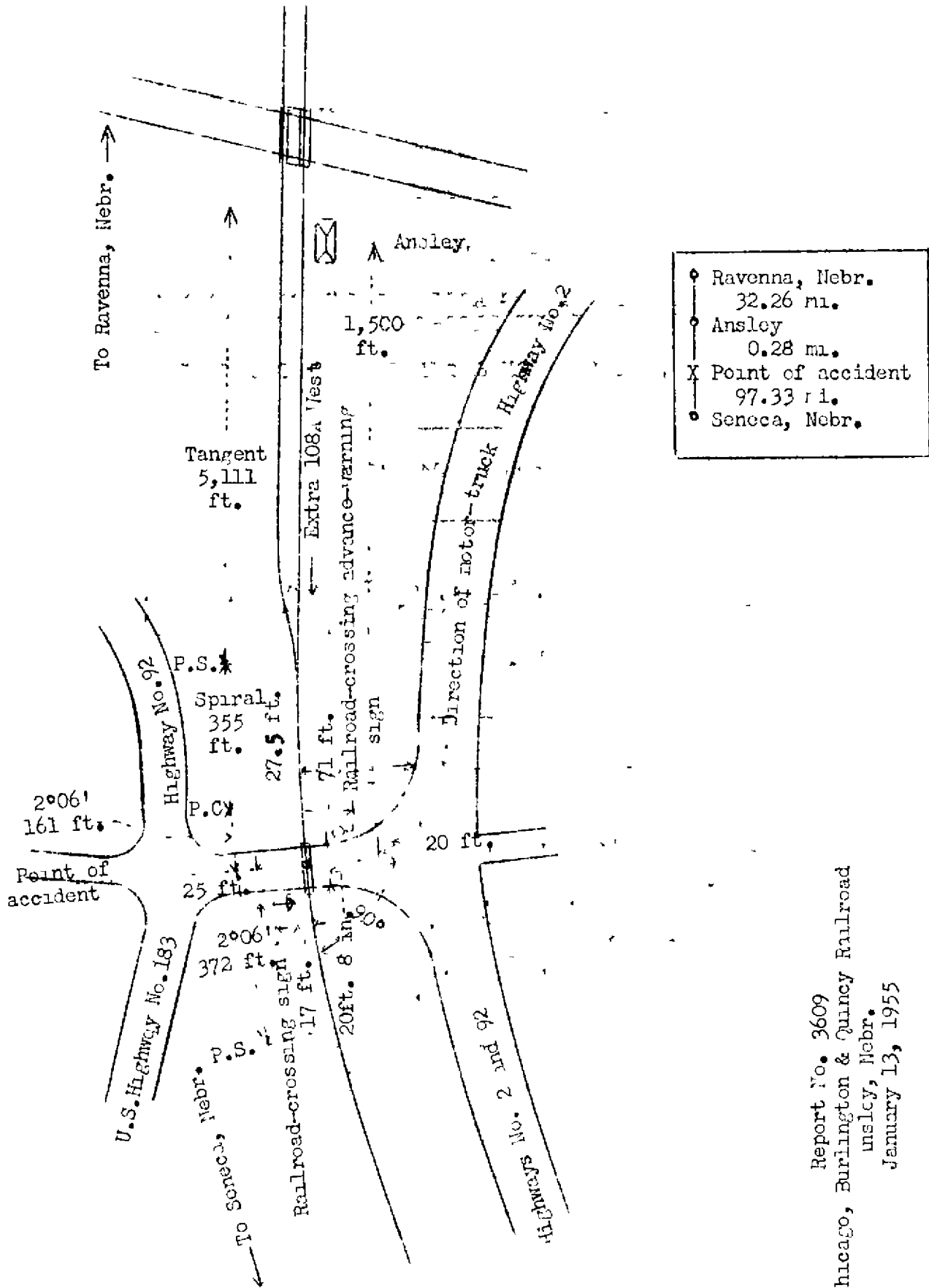
Accident near Ansley, Nebr., on January 13, 1955, caused
by a motor-truck and trailer occupying a rail-
highway grade crossing immediately in front of an
approaching train.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION

CLARKE, Commissioner:

On January 13, 1955, there was a collision between a
freight train on the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad
and a motor-truck and trailer at a rail-highway grade
crossing near Ansley, Nebr., which resulted in the death
of one train-service employee, and the injury of the
driver of the motor-truck and two train-service employees.

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



○	Ravenna, Nebr.	32.26 mi.
○	Ansley	0.28 mi.
X	Point of accident	97.33 mi.
○	Seneca, Nebr.	

Report No. 3609
 Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad
 Ansley, Nebr.
 January 13, 1955

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Alliance and Sterling Divisions extending between Ravenna and Seneca, Nebr., 129.87 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line, over which trains are operated by signal indications. The accident occurred on the main track 32.54 miles west of Ravenna and 1,500 feet west of the station at Ansley, where the railroad is crossed at grade by Nebraska State Highway No. 92. From the east on the railroad there are, in succession, a tangent 5,111 feet in length, a spiral 355 feet, and a 2°06' curve to the left 161 feet to the point of accident and 372 feet westward. The grade for west-bound trains is 0.39 percent ascending throughout a distance of more than 2,000 feet immediately east of the point of accident. In the vicinity of the crossing the track is laid on a fill approximately 5 feet in height.

In the immediate vicinity of the point of accident Nebraska State Highway No. 2 parallels the railroad on the south. The north edge of the highway is approximately 75 feet south of the track. Highway No. 92 extends northward from Highway No. 2 and intersects the railroad at right angles. This highway is 74 feet in width at the north edge of Highway No. 2 and narrows to 40 feet in width at a point 40 feet south of the crossing and to 20 feet 8 inches in width at the crossing. It is tangent throughout a distance of approximately 150 feet immediately north of the crossing and is surfaced with gravel. Planking is provided on each side of each rail at the crossing, and the remaining area of the crossing is surfaced with bituminous material to the level of the tops of the rails. The grade for north-bound vehicles averages approximately 6.0 percent ascending from the junction with Highway No. 2 to the crossing.

A circular railroad-crossing advance-warning sign is located to the right of the direction of north-bound highway traffic, about 20 feet east of the center-line of the highway and 27 feet 6 inches south of the center-line of the track. This sign is mounted on a post, and its center is 5 feet 2 inches above the level of the highway. It bears two diagonal black lines intersecting at right angles and the letters "RR" in black on a yellow background. A triangular metal railroad-crossing sign is mounted on a mast in the north-west angle of the intersection, approximately 25 feet west of the center-line of the highway and 17 feet north of the center-line of the track. Another rail-highway grade crossing is located immediately east of the station at Ansley and approximately 1,650 feet east of the point of accident.

This carrier's 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 --	Approaching public crossings at grade, last blast prolonged until crossing is reached.
* * *	

17. The headlight will be displayed to the front of every train by day and by night. * * *

Motor vehicle laws of the State of Nebraska read in part as follows:

39-724. * * * the driver * * * of any vehicle carrying explosive substances or inflammable liquids as a cargo or part of a cargo, before crossing at grade any track or tracks of a railroad, shall stop such vehicle within fifty feet but not less than ten feet from the nearest rail of such railroad, and while so stopped shall listen and look in both directions along such track for any approaching train and shall not proceed until he can do so safely * * *

Motor Carrier Safety Regulations of the Commission read in part as follows:

Part 192--Driving of Motor Vehicles

Section 192.10 Railroad grade crossings; stopping required. * * *

* * *

(c) Any cargo tank, whether loaded or empty, used for the transportation of any dangerous article as defined in the regulations of the Commission shall, upon approaching any railroad grade crossing, make a full stop not more than 50 feet, nor less than 15 feet from the nearest rail of such railroad grade crossing, and shall not proceed until due caution has been taken to ascertain that the course is clear; * * *

The Code of Federal Regulations pertaining to transportation defines gasoline in quantities over 10 gallons as a dangerous article.

The maximum authorized speed for freight trains is 50 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

Extra 108A West, a west-bound freight train, consisted of Diesel-electric units 108A, 108B, 108C, and 108D, coupled in multiple-unit control, 77 cars, and a caboose. This train departed from Ravenna at 8:25 a. m., passed the east siding-switch at Ansley, 1.48 miles east of the point of accident, at 9:14 a. m., according to the dispatcher's record of the movement of trains, and while moving at an estimated speed of 50 miles per hour it struck a motor-truck and trailer on a rail-highway crossing 1,500 feet west of the station at Ansley, where the railroad is crossed at grade by Nebraska State Highway No. 92.

The vehicles involved were a motor-truck and a trailer owned and operated by the Home Oil Company of Hastings, Nebr. The driver, who was the sole occupant, held Nebraska driver's license No. H32-05132. The truck was a 1953 Diamond T Model 921, powered by a six-cylinder Diesel engine. It bore Nebraska 1954 license No. 14-6-932 and Kansas 1954-1955 license No. 10574 10575. It was provided with an enclosed cab. Dual tires were provided on the rear wheels. A steel cargo tank was mounted on the chassis. The trailer was a four-wheel 1950 model Fruehauf, equipped with a steel cargo tank. Dual tires were provided on all wheels. This unit bore Nebraska 1954 license No. Trailer 14-13-17 and Kansas 1954-1955 license No. 10576. Both the truck and the trailer were equipped with air brakes. The total length of the truck and trailer, coupled, was 49 feet 9 inches. At the time of the accident compartments Nos. 1, 2, and 3 of the tank on the truck were loaded with 970 gallons of furnace oil, 275 gallons of ethyl gasoline, and 885 gallons of regular gasoline, respectively. The Nos. 1, 2, and 3 compartments of the trailer tank were loaded with 1,930 gallons of regular gasoline, 485 gallons of furnace oil, and 1,940 gallons of furnace oil, respectively. This cargo was loaded at Eldorado, Kans., and was destined to Sargent, Nebr. These vehicles approached the point of accident from the east on Highway No. 2 and entered Highway No. 92 at the junction immediately south of the crossing. The vehicles then proceeded northward on this highway, and while moving over the crossing at an undetermined speed they were struck by Extra 108A West.

Extra 108A West stopped with the front end of the locomotive 1,471 feet west of the point of collision. None of the equipment of the train was derailed. The front end of the first Diesel-electric unit was damaged by the collision. The tanks of both vehicles were ruptured, and the control and engine compartments of the first Diesel-electric unit were badly damaged by an explosion of gasoline vapor, which had seeped into the body of the unit, and by the ensuing fire. The second Diesel-electric unit was somewhat damaged by fire.

The truck and the trailer were separated by the force of the impact. The truck stopped on its left side, headed eastward, on the north side of the track and parallel to it. The front end of this vehicle was 4 feet west of the highway and 24 feet north of the track. The front wheels of the trailer were displaced when the collision occurred, and the trailer stopped with the front end immediately west of the highway and 21 feet south of the track. The rear end stopped on the highway about 40 feet south of the track. The truck was destroyed, and the trailer was badly damaged.

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

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 9:16 a. m.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident the average daily movement over the crossing was 9.4 trains. During the 24-hour period beginning at 1 p. m., January 18, 1956, 283 automobiles and 64 motor-trucks passed over the crossing.

Discussion

As Extra 108A West was approaching the point where the accident occurred the enginemen and the front brakeman were maintaining a lookout ahead from their respective positions in the control compartment at the front of the locomotive. The conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. The speed was about 50 miles per hour, as estimated by the surviving members of the crew. The headlight was lighted. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. The fireman and the front brakeman said that the grade-crossing whistle signal had been sounded for two grade crossings east of the station at Ansley, and it was being sounded again as the train approached the crossing west of the station. They observed the truck and

trailer moving westward on Highway No. 2 when the locomotive was in the vicinity of the station. The members of the crew on the locomotive became concerned when the vehicles turned into Highway No. 92 and proceeded toward the crossing. The engineer continued to sound the pneumatic horn, and when it became apparent that the vehicles would enter the crossing in front of the train he moved the brake valve to emergency position. The collision occurred before the speed of the train was materially reduced. Immediately after the brakes were applied the fireman and the front brakeman left the control compartment. They estimated that the locomotive was then 200 feet east of the crossing. The surviving members of the crew on the locomotive said that the collision occurred immediately after they left the control compartment, and a few seconds later, after they had proceeded to the rear door of the first Diesel-electric unit, there was an explosion. Apparently gasoline from the ruptured tanks of the vehicles entered the control and engine compartments of this unit and vaporized sufficiently to explode when it became ignited.

During this investigation the driver of the truck stated that he stopped the truck and looked and listened for approaching trains before entering the crossing, and that he then proceeded and did not observe Extra 108A West approaching until immediately before the collision occurred. From other information obtained during the investigation it appears that after the accident occurred the driver may have made conflicting statements as to whether the truck had been stopped immediately before it entered the crossing. The driver had been regularly employed since October 6, 1953, in this service in the territory where the accident occurred.

The laws of the State of Nebraska and the regulations of this Commission require that vehicles transporting inflammable liquids or dangerous articles must stop within prescribed distances from the nearest rail of a railroad at a crossing of the type here involved, and must not proceed until the driver has ascertained that it is safe to do so. As a vehicle approaches this crossing from the junction of Highways Nos. 2 and 92, the driver has an unobstructed view of the track east of the crossing throughout a distance of more than 1,500 feet. A railroad-crossing advance-warning sign for north-bound highway traffic and a standard triangular railroad-crossing sign, visible to highway traffic in either direction, are provided at this crossing.

Cause

This accident was caused by a motor-truck and trailer occupying a rail-highway grade crossing immediately in front of an approaching train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-fourth day of February, 1955.

By the Commission, Commissioner Clarke.

(SEAL)

GEORGE W. LAIRD,
Secretary.