

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

---

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR

BUREAU OF SAFETY

---

ACCIDENT ON THE  
CHICAGO, BURLINGTON & QUINCY RAILROAD

---

HOAG, NEBR.

---

APRIL 24, 1936

---

INVESTIGATION NO. 2059

SUMMARY

---

Railroad: Chicago, Burlington & Quincy  
Date: April 24, 1936  
Location: Hoag, Nebr.  
Kind of accident: Collision  
Equipment involved: Mixed train : Motor truck  
Train Number: 24  
Engine number: 2563  
Consist: 3 cars : Tractor and trailer  
Speed: 40 m.p.h. : 35 m.p.h.  
Track: Tangent and level for both track  
and highway  
Weather: Clear  
Time: 8:45 a.m.  
Casualties: 1 killed and 2 injured  
Cause: Truck being driven upon a highway  
grade crossing just as a train was  
approaching.

June 19, 1936

To the Commission:

On April 24, 1936, there was a collision between a mixed train and a motor truck at a highway grade crossing on the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad near Hoag, Nebr., which resulted in the death of the driver of the truck and the injury of two railroad employees.

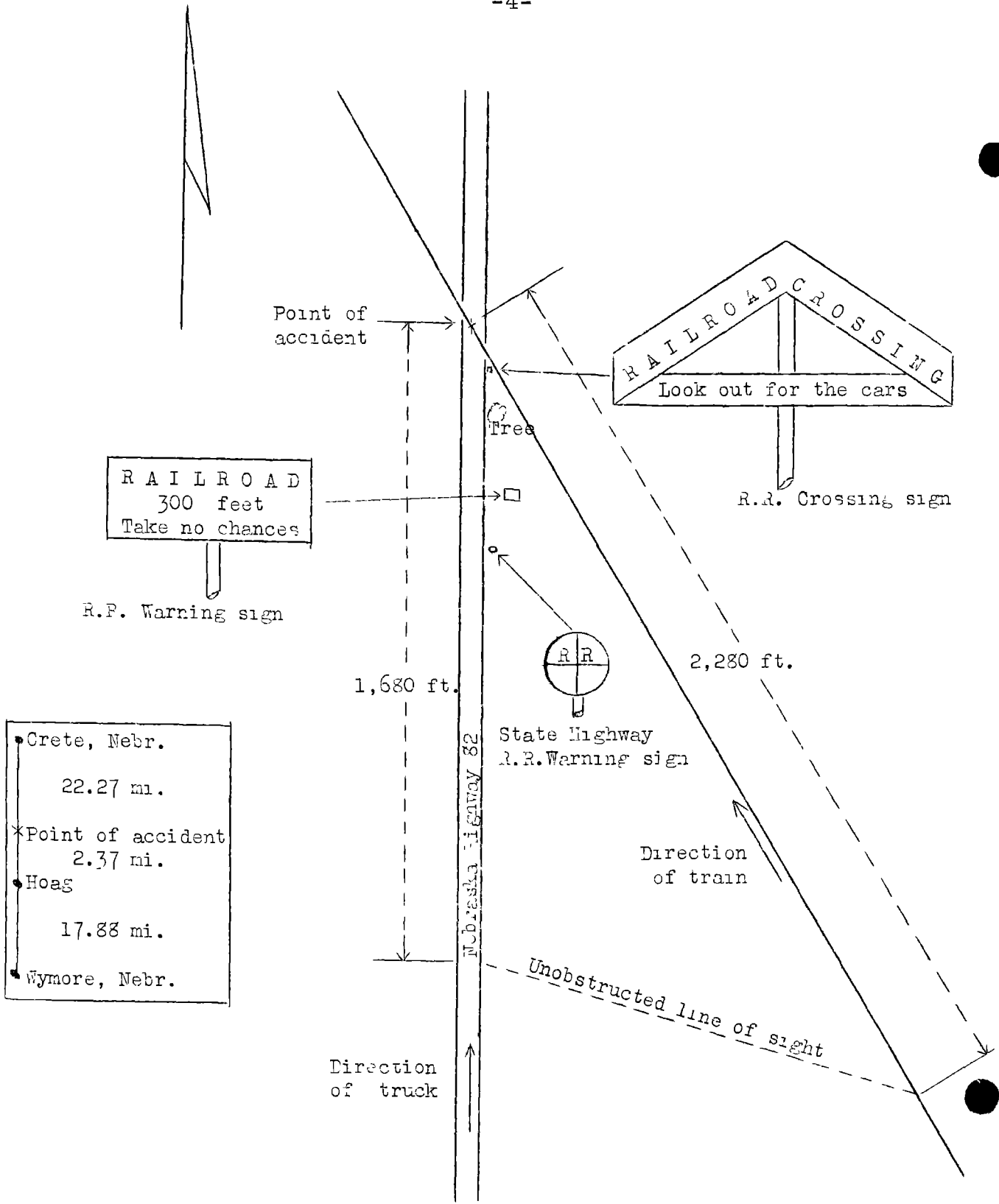
#### Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on the Crete and Wymore Sub-division of the Wymore Division, which extends between Crete and Wymore, Nebr., a distance of 42.52 miles, and is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time table, train orders, and a manual block-signal system. The accident occurred at a point 2.37 miles north of Hoag, where the track crosses Nebraska State Highway 82; approaching this point from the south on the railroad, the track is tangent and practically level for more than 1 mile, and there is a whistle board located 1,300 feet south of the crossing. The maximum authorized speed over this subdivision is 40 miles per hour.

Nebraska State Highway 82 runs north and south according to compass directions, and crosses the track at an angle of  $36^{\circ} 30'$ ; it is a gravel road, 28 feet in width, and is straight and practically level for more than 2,000 feet south of the crossing. A state warning sign of the disc type, bearing the letters "RR", is located 400 feet from the crossing; a warning sign, maintained by the railroad company, bearing the words, "RAILROAD 300 FEET TAKE NO CHANCES", is located 300 feet from the crossing, and near the fence along the right-of-way, about 25 feet from the track, is a triangular crossing sign reading, "RAILROAD CROSSING LOOK OUT FOR THE CARS". The Nebraska State law provides that "The drivers of all trucks shall, immediately before crossing any railroad track, bring their vehicles to a complete stop and carefully look in both directions for approaching trains before crossing said railroad tracks".

With the exception of a tree about 5 feet in diameter, located about 100 feet from the crossing, to the right of the highway and left of the track, there is nothing to obstruct the view between the highway and the railroad within a distance of 2,280 feet from the crossing on the railroad and 1,680 feet on the highway.

The weather was clear and the sun was shining at the time of the accident, which occurred at 8:45 a.m.



Inv. No. 2059  
 C. B. & Q. R.R.  
 Hoag, Nebr.  
 April 24, 1936.

### Description

Train No. 24, a north-bound mixed train, consisted of 1 combination mail and baggage car and 2 coaches, hauled by engine 2563, and was in charge of Conductor Neff and Engineman Myers. The first and third cars were of all-steel construction, while the second car was of steel-underframe construction. This train departed from Beatrice, 5.74 miles south of Hoag, the last open office, at 8:30 a.m., according to the train sheet, on time, and after passing Hoag was struck by a motor truck on state highway 82 while traveling at a speed estimated to have been about 40 miles per hour.

The truck involved was a 6-cylinder, 1½-ton Chevrolet tractor, 1933 model, equipped with an enclosed cab, hauling a tank trailer loaded with 2,300 gallons of gasoline. The total light weight of tractor and trailer was 8,960 pounds. The four wheels of the tractor were equipped with mechanical brakes, while the two trailer wheels had air brakes. This truck, owned by the Edgar Oil Company, of Ashland, Nebr., was operated at the time of the accident by Arlin Hoff, and was en route from the Skelly Refinery at Eldorado, Kans., to Wilbur, Nebr. The truck, proceeding northward on the highway at a speed of approximately 35 miles per hour, apparently did not stop before reaching the crossing, and struck the left front corner of the engine.

The truck was demolished and stopped about 70 feet from the crossing and to the left of the track, where the wreckage was destroyed by fire. Gasoline was sprayed over the engine and cars, but caused only slight damage. No part of the train was derailed and the engine was not badly damaged; the train was stopped 1,275 feet beyond the crossing. The railroad employees injured, as a result of burns, were the engineman and fireman.

### Summary of evidence

Engineman Myers stated that his train was traveling at a speed of about 40 miles per hour, that the engine bell was ringing, and that he sounded the crossing whistle signal, prolonging the last blast until the engine reached the crossing, and he said he had just placed his hand on the throttle when he heard a noise as though a heavy piece of iron had broken under the engine. He closed the throttle, placed his hand on the brake valve, and leaned out of the window to see if any dirt was flying and just at that instant an explosion occurred, followed by fire coming in through the left front window and

the gangway on the left side. Engineman Myers stated that when the flames entered the cab he ducked his head and on looking around he saw the fireman, enveloped in flames, drop off from the gangway. The train was surrounded with smoke and he then realized that it had struck a gasoline truck, and as soon as the flames permitted, he applied the air brakes in emergency.

Fireman Troudt stated that he was on his seatbox and saw the truck approaching on the highway. The engineman sounded the crossing signal and the fireman had no doubt that the truck driver had seen the train and apparently was stopping. The fireman then looked away from the truck long enough to close the injector and shut off the overflow and when he again looked ahead the truck was on the crossing. He then left his seat and was practically over on the engineman's side of the cab when the collision occurred. Fireman Troudt did not inform the engineman of the approaching truck as he felt sure the truck would stop, and when he knew a collision was imminent he did not warn the engineman as he was afraid the engineman might apply the brakes and stop the train, endangering it in case of fire.

Conductor Neff stated that from the marks on the engine, the truck and engine reached the crossing at the same time; Conductor Neff and Flagman Windsor also said that the usual crossing whistle signal was sounded.

Mr. C. E. Quackenbush, who was working on the left side of the highway about 40 rods from the crossing, cleaning out a drainage ditch, stated that the oil truck passed him at an average rate of speed and that the truck driver waved to him; there appeared to be no one on the truck beside the driver. As the truck passed he also saw the approaching train, but paid no further attention either to the truck or the train until his attention was attracted by the engine whistle. He looked up just as the truck struck the front part of the engine, this being followed instantly by a sheet of flame which enveloped both the engine and truck. Mr. Quackenbush stated that when he first saw the truck and the train they seemed to be about the same distance from the crossing and he did not think that the truck stopped, saying that if it had stopped, the train would have cleared the crossing.

Mr. Richard Hicken, who was working on a farm about one-fourth mile south of the crossing, stated that he saw the truck when it was about opposite him, at which time the train was about the same distance from the crossing. The truck was traveling at a speed of about 35 miles per hour and did not appear to

reduce speed. Mr. Hicken said the crossing whistle signal might have been sounded, but that he did not pay particular attention to the train until he saw that the truck and train were going to meet at the crossing; he then heard two short blasts on the whistle, when the engine was about 100 feet from the crossing, and in a few seconds the truck struck approximately the center of the engine.

Information furnished to the Commission's inspectors by Mr. P. L. Edgar, owner of the truck involved, was to the effect that Mr. Hoff had been in his employ as a truck driver for 19 days and at the time of the accident had made his seventh trip to the refinery at Eldorado; he was 39 years of age, married, and a man of excellent habits and good reputation, but had not had a great deal of experience in driving trucks, although he had driven automobiles for many years. Truck Driver Hoff left Ashland, Nebr., about 8:30 a.m., April 23, and had been on duty slightly in excess of 24 hours at the time of the accident, having been off duty about 43 hours previous to this service; the distance traveled from Ashland to Eldorado and back to the point of accident was about 490 miles. Mr. Edgar said that he owned only one transport truck and employed two drivers, who are selected with care but receive no written instructions, and the only oral instructions are that when a driver feels sleepy he must pull off the road, and whenever chains are needed on account of road conditions the driver must stop and wait for better conditions. Mr. Edgar did not know whether or not Driver Hoff was familiar with the Nebraska law requiring trucks to stop before crossing railroad tracks.

An inspection of engine 2563 by the Commission's inspectors disclosed marks on seven bars of the steel pilot, these marks being to the left of the coupler. The end of the pilot beam and the cylinder jacket were scratched on the left side of the engine, while the radius rod of the valve motion was bent and the top guide bar broken. The motor truck was so badly damaged by the collision, and further distorted by fire, that it was impossible to determine just what part of the truck first struck the engine; the front bumper, however, was not bent, indicating that the driver might have turned to the left in an attempt to avert the collision, while the gear was found to be in third or intermediate speed.

A check of motor traffic passing over this crossing on the highway for a 24-hour period showed that it consisted of 190 automobiles and 46 trucks; only 4 of the trucks stopped as required by law.

### Discussion

The evidence indicates that the engineman sounded the crossing whistle signal, although the statements of two eyewitnesses indicated that possibly this was not done until close to the crossing. The fireman saw the truck, but was so sure it was going to stop that he looked away long enough to close the injector and shut off the overflow, and when he looked out again it was too late to avert the accident. The statements of the two eyewitnesses indicated that the truck driver did not reduce speed at any time until too close to stop, although it is possible he tried to turn to the left at the last moment. While there was nothing to obstruct the view, with the exception of a tree located about 100 feet from the crossing, the highway crossed the track at such an angle that with a driver sitting on the left side of an enclosed cab, it is possible that he could not see the approaching train. According to the evidence the train and truck were about the same distance from the crossing when they were first seen by eyewitnesses of the accident, and the truck did not stop before starting over the crossing. Not only was it required by state law that all trucks stop before passing over railroad crossings at grade, but the driver of a truck carrying gasoline or other highly inflammable explosives should take extraordinary precautions to insure safety at such points.

At the time of the accident the driver had been on duty continuously for more than 24 hours and during that time had driven approximately 490 miles; while he may have obtained some rest en route, the fact remains that driving motor vehicles for long periods of time is certain to affect materially the ability of a driver, preventing him from being as alert and attentive to his duties as is necessary for the safe handling of his vehicle.

Traffic on this highway is not heavy and the view approaching the crossing is so open that any reasonable precautions should be sufficient to avoid an accident of the kind here involved, even though there is no protection other than that afforded by signs and the requirements of state law. The law requires trucks to stop, and apparently a failure to obey the law led directly to the occurrence of this accident. In this connection it is to be noted that in a subsequent traffic check it was found that about 91 percent of the trucks using this crossing failed to stop as required.



Conclusion

This accident was caused by a truck being driven upon a highway grade crossing just as a train was approaching.

Recommendation

It is recommended that responsible local authorities take the necessary steps to enforce the provisions of law requiring trucks to be stopped before passing over railroad crossings at grade.

Respectfully submitted,

W. J. PATTERSON,

Director.