

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2624
THE CHICAGO, MILWAUKEE, ST. PAUL AND PACIFIC
RAILROAD COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
AT MILES CITY, MONT., ON
SEPTEMBER 1, 1942

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SUMMARY

Railroad: Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul
and Pacific

Date: September 1, 1942

Location: Miles City, Mont.

Kind of accident: Rear-end collision

Trains involved: Freight : Mixed

Train numbers: Extra 361 East : 36

Engine numbers: 361 : 321

Consist: 75 cars, caboose : 20 cars

Speed: 10-15 m. p. h. : 30-35 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable, train orders and
manual-block system; yard limits

Track: Single; tangent; level

Weather: Clear

Time: About 10:05 p. m.

Casualties: 2 killed; 3 injured

Cause: Accident caused by failure properly
to control speed of following train
moving within yard limits

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2624

IN THE MATTER OF MAKING ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORTS
UNDER THE ACCIDENT REPORTS ACT OF MAY 8, 1910.

THE CHICAGO, MILWAUKEE, ST. PAUL AND PACIFIC
RAILROAD COMPANY

November 5, 1942.

Accident at Miles City, Mont., on September 1, 1942, caused
by failure properly to control speed of following train
moving within yard limits.

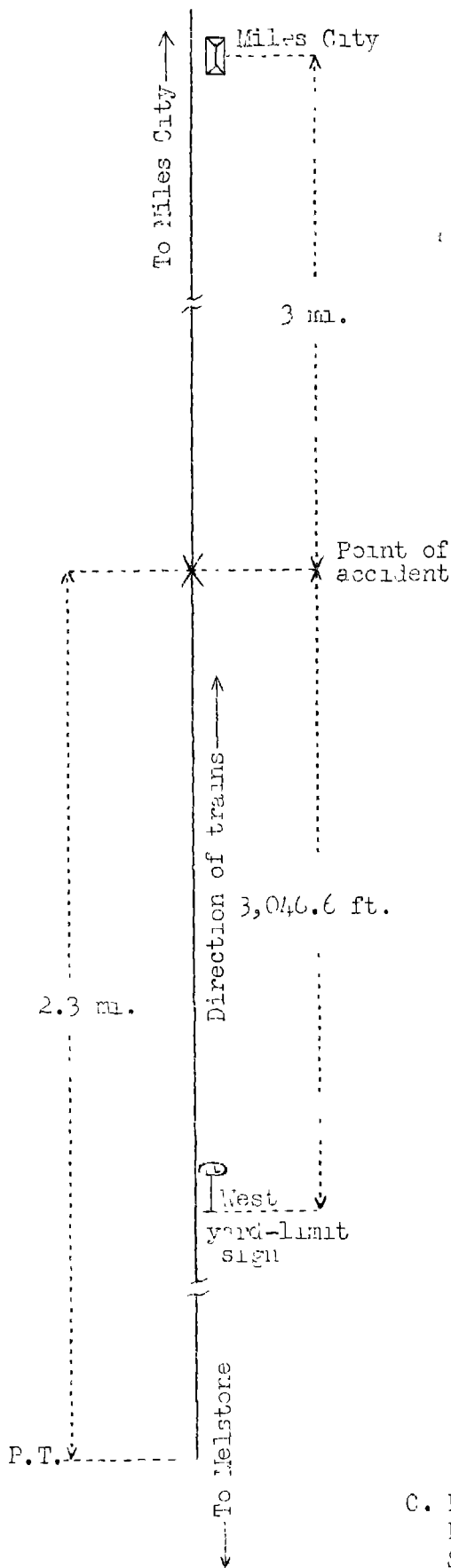
¹
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On September 1, 1942, there was a rear-end collision between a freight train and a mixed train on the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad at Miles City, Mont., which resulted in the death of two employees and the injury of three employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Montana Board of Railroad Commissioners and Public Service Commission.

¹Under 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.

- Miles City, Mont.
3.0 mi.
- X Point of accident
4.8 mi.
- Paragon
54.4 mi.
- Vananda
49.4 mi.
- Melstone, Mont.



Inv. No. 2624
C. M. St. F. & P. R. R.
Miles City, Mont.
September 1, 1942

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Trans-Missouri Division designated as the Third Subdivision and extending between Melstone and Miles City, Mont., a distance of 111.6 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders and a manual-block system. The accident occurred on the main track within yard limits at a point 3 miles west of the station at Miles City and 3,046.6 feet east of the west yard-limit sign. As the point of accident is approached from the west the track is tangent a distance of 2.3 miles to the point of accident and 4,840 feet beyond. At the point of accident the grade is level.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

DEFINITIONS.

Restricted Speed.--Proceed prepared to stop short of train, obstruction, or anything that may require the speed of a train to be reduced.

* * *

93. * * *

Within yard limits the main track may be used without protecting against second and inferior class, extra trains and engines.

Second and inferior class, extra trains and engines must move within yard limits at restricted speed.

* * *

In the vicinity of the point of accident the maximum authorized speed for the trains involved is 45 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

Extra 361 East, an east-bound freight train, departed from Melstone at 9:30 a. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains. After cars were added, this train, consisting of engine 361, 39 loaded and 36 empty cars and a caboose, departed from Paragon, 7.8 miles west of Miles City, at 9:45 p. m., according to the statement of the conductor, and while moving within the yard limits at Miles City at an estimated speed of 10 to 15 miles per hour its rear end was struck by No. 36.

No. 36, an east-bound third-class mixed train, consisted of engine 321, 19 loaded freight cars and one passenger-baggage-mail car, in the order named. At Melstone a road test of the air brakes was made and this train departed at 4:50 p. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 4 hours 20 minutes late, departed from Vananda, 62.2 miles west of Miles City and the last open office, at 7:35 p. m., according to the statement of the conductor, 5 hours 12 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 30 to 35 miles per hour it collided with the rear end of Extra 361 East. The brakes of No. 36 had functioned properly at all points where used en route.

The caboose of Extra 361 East was demolished. The first and second cars ahead of the caboose were badly damaged. Engine 321, of No. 36, was derailed to the south and stopped on its right side, badly damaged, parallel to the track and with the front end of the engine 181.4 feet east of the point of collision. The front end, the engine frame and the pilot were broken. The tender was torn loose from the engine and stopped across the main track at the rear of the engine and at right angles to it. Both trucks were detached. The first to fourth cars, inclusive, were derailed and stopped, badly damaged, in various positions on either side of the track. Two of these cars were demolished. The front truck of the fifth car was derailed and the car was badly damaged.

It was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 10:05 p. m.

The employees killed were the conductor and the flagman of Extra 361 East, and the employees injured were the engineer, the fireman and the front brakeman of No. 36.

Data

Tests made after the accident disclosed that at night, when the weather was clear, lighted marker lamps displayed at the point of accident could be seen plainly from the cab of an east-bound engine throughout a distance of 4,700 feet. A caboose without marker lamps could be seen in the reflection of a headlight a distance of 1,400 feet.

Discussion

The rules governing operation on the line involved provide that within yard limits trains and engines may use the main track without protecting against second-class, inferior-class and extra trains, and on single track all except first-class trains must be operated prepared to stop short of train, obstruction, or anything that may require the speed of a train

to be reduced. The surviving employees understood these requirements.

Extra 361 East was proceeding within yard limits at a speed of 10 to 15 miles per hour, and when the caboose reached a point 5,046 feet east of the west yard-limit sign the rear end was struck by No. 36. Since both the conductor and the flagman of Extra 361 were killed in the accident, it could not be determined when they first became aware that a collision was imminent.

As No. 36 was approaching Miles City the speed was about 45 miles per hour and the enginemen and the front brakeman were maintaining a lookout ahead. Brake-pipe pressure of 90 pounds was being maintained. At a point about 2 miles west of the point of accident the engineer partially closed the throttle and made a brake-pipe reduction. When the speed was reduced to about 35 miles per hour the brakes were released. The first that the engine crew were aware of the preceding train was when they saw the caboose about 1,000 feet distant. The fireman called a warning and the engineer moved the brake valve to emergency position, but the distance was not sufficient for stopping No. 36 short of the preceding train. The members of the crew on the engine of No. 36 said that the speed was 30 or 35 miles per hour at the time of the collision. Both enginemen of No. 36 said that the marker lamps on the caboose of Extra 361 East were extinguished and flood lights on a bridge, located 4,411 feet east of the point of accident, obscured their vision. Two bridge guards, located several miles west of the point of accident, said that when Extra 361 East passed over the bridge both marker lamps were lighted and were plainly visible.

Under the rules, No. 36 was required to be operated within yard limits prepared to stop short of a train or obstruction. The investigation disclosed that No. 36 entered the yard limits in excess of 30 miles per hour, maintained that speed throughout a distance of 3,000 feet, and the speed was not materially decreased at the time of the collision. It was dark and the weather was clear. Tests disclosed that lighted marker lamps located at the point of accident could be seen throughout a distance of 4,700 feet westward. A caboose without markers could be seen in the reflection of a headlight throughout a distance of 1,400 feet. If No. 36 had been operated in accordance with the yard-limit rule, this accident would have been averted.

The investigation disclosed that No. 36 was moving within yard limits at the customary rate of speed. The engineer said that supervisory officers have ridden on the engine when his train entered the yard limits at Miles City at speeds comparable

to the speed of No. 36 just prior to the accident, and he had never been criticized for operating at excessive speed. Failure of employees repeatedly to observe operating rules is a result of lax supervision. Operating rules must be enforced in order to prevent recurrence of similar accidents.

Before No. 36 departed from Melstone, no terminal air-brake test was made; however, after the cars were assembled, the engineer made a 15-pound brake-pipe reduction and when the brake on the rear car became applied the conductor gave a proceed signal. No examination of the train brake system was made to determine if each brake applied and released. All members of the crew of No. 36 said that it is not customary to make proper terminal air-brake tests at Melstone. There was no evidence that the brakes did not function properly between Melstone and Miles City; nevertheless, No. 36 left Melstone without the crew knowing the actual condition of the train brake system.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure properly to control the speed of the following train moving within yard limits.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this fifth
day of November, 1942.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.