

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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REPORT NO. 3689

CHICAGO, MILWAUKEE, ST. PAUL AND PACIFIC  
RAILROAD COMPANY

IN RE ACCIDENT

AT MAUSTON, WIS., ON

MAY 3, 1956

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## SUMMARY

Date: May 3, 1956

Railroad: Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific

Location: Mauston, Wis.

Kind of accident: Collision

Equipment involved: Passenger train : Motor-truck

Train number: 3 :

Locomotive number: Diesel-electric :  
units 105C, 105B,  
and 101A

Consist: 10 cars :

Speeds: 88 m. p. h. : 8-10 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable, train orders, and  
automatic block-signal and  
cab-signal system

Tracks: Double; tangent; 0.14 percent  
ascending grade westward

Highway: Tangent; crosses track at angle of  
90°; 1.00 percent descending grade  
northward

Weather: Drizzling

Time: 4:07 p. m.

Casualties: 1 killed; 3 injured

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

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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REPORT NO. 3689

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

CHICAGO, MILWAUKEE, ST. PAUL AND PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY

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June 28, 1956

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Accident at Mauston, Wis., on May 3, 1956, caused by a  
motor-truck occupying a rail-highway grade crossing  
immediately in front of an approaching train.

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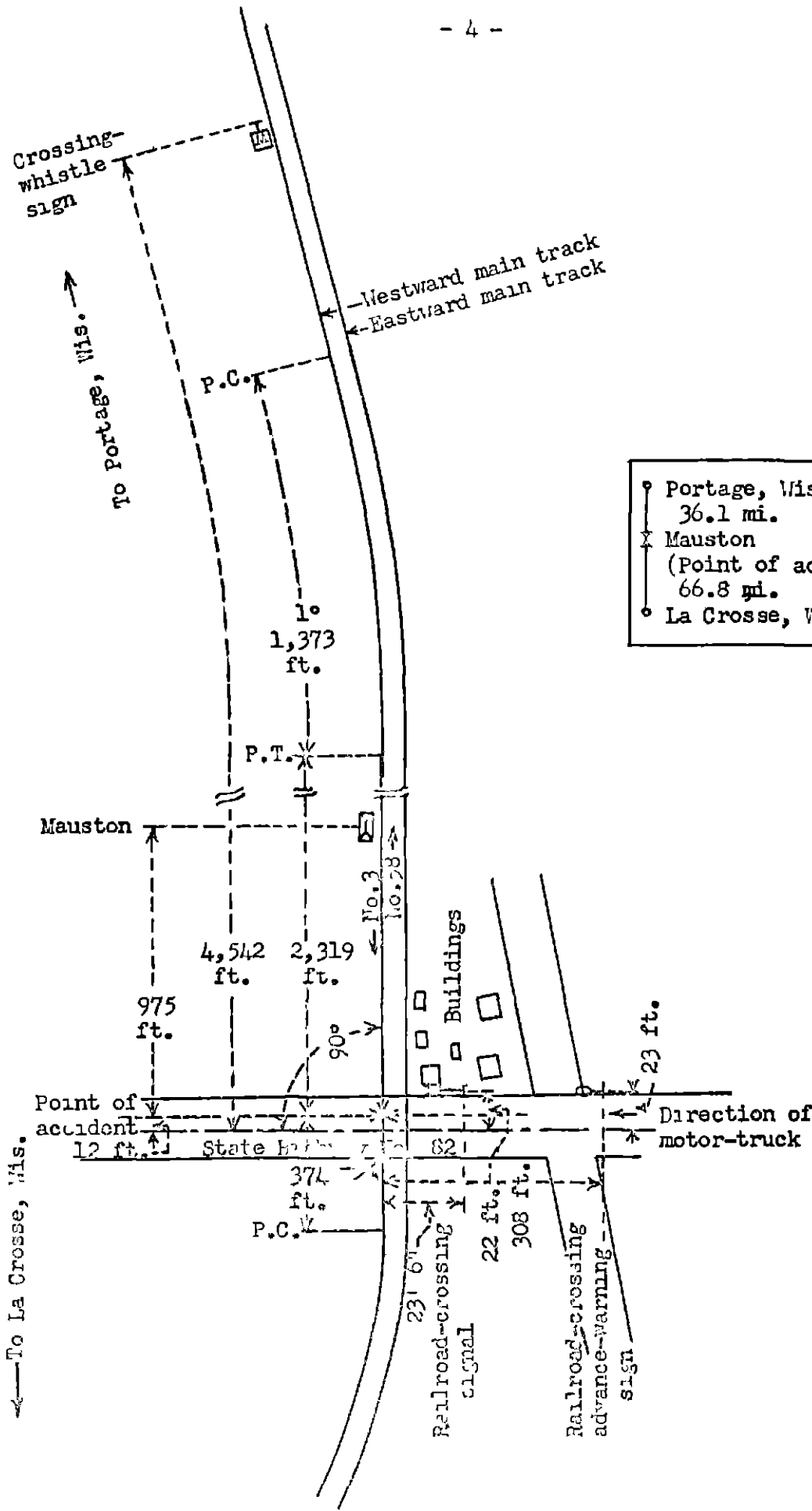
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION<sup>1</sup>

CLARKE, Commissioner:

On May 3, 1956, there was a collision between a passenger train on the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad and a motor-truck at a rail-highway grade crossing at Mauston, Wis., which resulted in the death of one train-service employee, and the injury of the driver of the motor-truck, one train-service employee, and one employee not on duty.

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<sup>1</sup>  
Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Clarke for consideration and disposition.



○	Portage, Wis.
	36.1 mi.
×	Mauston (Point of accident)
	66.8 mi.
○	La Crosse, Wis.

Report No. 3689  
 Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad  
 Mauston, Wis.  
 May 3, 1956

### Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the La Crosse and River Division extending between Portage and La Crosse, Wis., 102.9 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a double-track line, over which trains moving with the current of traffic are operated by timetable, train orders, and an automatic-block and cab-signal system. The accident occurred on the westward main track at a point 36.1 miles west of Portage and 975 feet west of the station at Mauston, where the railroad is crossed at grade by Wisconsin State Highway No. 82. From the east there is a 1° curve to the right 1,373 feet in length and a tangent 2,319 feet to the point of accident and 374 feet westward. The grade is 0.14 percent ascending westward at the point of accident.

Wisconsin State Highway No. 82 is tangent throughout a distance of several hundred feet on each side of the crossing. It intersects the railroad at an angle of 90°. It is surfaced with bituminous material to a width of 40 feet 6 inches between curb lines. The area between the rails and outside each rail at the crossing is surfaced with plank, and the area between the tracks is surfaced with bituminous material to the level of the tops of the rails. The grade for north-bound vehicles is 1.00 percent descending throughout a distance of several hundred feet immediately south of the crossing.

A circular railroad-crossing advance-warning sign is located 23 feet east of the center-line of the highway and 308 feet south of the center-line of the westward main track. This sign is 30 inches in diameter and is mounted on a mast approximately 6 feet above the level of the highway. It bears two diagonal lines intersecting at right angles and the letters "RR" in black on a yellow background. A railroad-crossing signal of the flashing-light type is located 22 feet east of the highway and 23 feet 6 inches south of the center-line of the westward main track. This signal consists of a standard cross buck mounted on a mast approximately 10 feet 4 inches above the level of the highway. The cross buck bears the words "RAILROAD CROSSING" in white reflectorized letters on a black background. Two hooded red lamps are mounted back-to-back at each end of a bracket which is attached to the same mast at a point approximately 8 feet above the level of the street. These lights are spaced 30 inches center-to-center. An octagonal sign which bears the word "STOP" in white letters on a black background is located immediately below the lights. A reflectorized sign bearing the numeral "2" and the word "TRACKS" in white on a black background is mounted on the same mast immediately below this sign. The warning aspect is displayed by the

alternate illumination of the lamps and the rotation of the octagonal sign so that the word "STOP" is displayed in the direction of approaching highway traffic. This aspect is displayed when a west-bound train occupies any portion of the westward main track throughout a distance of 3,018 feet immediately east of the crossing or when an east-bound train occupies any portion of the eastward main track throughout a distance of 3,723 feet immediately west of the crossing. A similar signal is located in the north-west angle of the intersection. A crossing-whistle sign for west-bound trains is located 4,542 feet east of the crossing.

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

14. ENGINE WHISTLE SIGNALS.

\* \* \*

The signals are illustrated by "o" for short sounds; "--" for longer sounds. \* \* \*

In sounding signal 14 (1) for public crossings, the first of the long sounds must be started at such a point that the signal will be completed by ending the last sound immediately after passing over the crossing, prolonging it if necessary. \* \* \*

Sound	Indication
* * *	
(1) -- -- o --	Approaching public crossings at grade, * * *.
* * *	

17(C). On \* \* \* diesel-electric \* \* \* trains, when full power headlight is not required it must be burning dim during daylight hours \* \* \*.

30. The engine bell must be rung when an engine is \* \* \* approaching and passing public crossings at grade, \* \* \*.

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

85.92 Stop at railroad crossings. (1) No operator of a vehicle shall drive on or across a grade crossing with the main line track of any railroad \* \* \* while any warning device signals to stop, except that in the latter case after stop and investigation finds that no train or car is approaching he may proceed \* \* \*.

The maximum authorized speed for passenger trains in the vicinity of the point of accident is 90 miles per hour.

#### Description of Accident

No. 3, a west-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of Diesel-electric units 105C, 105B, and 101A, coupled in multiple-unit control, one express car, five coaches, one dome car, one dining car, one parlor car, and one parlor-observation car, in the order named. All cars were of all-steel construction. This train departed from Portage at 3:38 p. m., 2 minutes late, passed the station at Mauston at 4:07 p. m., 4 minutes late, and while moving at a speed of 88 miles per hour, as indicated by the tape of the speed-recording device, it struck a motor-truck at a rail-highway crossing 975 feet west of the station at Mauston, where the railroad is crossed at grade by Wisconsin State Highway No. 82.

The vehicle involved was a 1955 International dump truck owned by Art Overguard, Elroy, Wis. It was equipped with dual wheels and tires at the rear. It bore Wisconsin license X-D-169-4-2. At the time of the accident the driver, who held Wisconsin driver's license No. 377295, was the sole occupant. This vehicle was moving northward on Wisconsin State Highway No. 82 at an estimated speed of 8 to 10 miles per hour when it entered upon the crossing and was struck by No. 3. At the time of the accident the cargo of the motor-truck consisted of 7 cubic yards of crushed rock.

No equipment of No. 3 was derailed. The train stopped with the front of the locomotive 4,290 feet west of the point of accident. The motor-truck was struck near the center of the body and was demolished. It stopped in the northwest angle of the intersection. When the impact occurred the door at the front end of the first Diesel-electric unit of No. 3 was forced inward. Crushed rock entered the front compartment through this opening with sufficient force to dislodge the door between this compartment and the control compartment, and a considerable amount of the crushed rock was deposited in the control compartment.

The fireman of No. 3 was killed. The engineer and one employee not on duty who was on the locomotive of No. 3 were injured.

It was drizzling at the time of the accident, which occurred at 4:07 p. m.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident the average daily movement over the crossing was 23.1 trains. During the 24-hour period beginning at 12:01 a. m., May 9, 1956, 1,753 automobiles, 10 buses, 602 trucks, and 5 other vehicles passed over the crossing.

### Discussion

As No. 3 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the enginemen and a train dispatcher not on duty were maintaining a lookout ahead from the control compartment at the front of the first Diesel-electric unit. The members of the train crew were in the cars of the train. The speed was 88 miles per hour. The brakes of the train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. The engineer said that the headlight was lighted brightly and that the oscillating headlight also was lighted. He said that the grade-crossing whistle signal was sounded for several grade crossings east of Wisconsin State Highway No. 82 and that the signal was prolonged until the accident occurred. The locomotive bell was ringing during this time. No. 3 passed No. 58, an east-bound passenger train consisting of a diesel-electric locomotive and six cars, a short distance east of Wisconsin State Highway No. 82. The engineer of No. 3 said that after the rear end of No. 58 passed the crossing he saw the motor-truck entering the crossing. He thought that at this time his locomotive was about 150 feet east of the crossing. When he saw that the truck was entering the crossing he immediately made an emergency application of the brakes. The collision occurred before the speed of the train had been reduced.

A statement from the driver of the motor-truck was not obtained during this investigation. Several witnesses to the accident said that the warning signals at the crossing were in operation as No. 58 approached, and that they continued to operate until the accident occurred. They said that the engineer of No. 3 was sounding the grade-crossing whistle signal as the train approached the crossing. One witness who was behind the truck said that the truck was 30 or 40 feet south of the crossing when the rear end of No. 58 passed. He said that the truck was moving slowly



and that it entered the crossing without stopping almost immediately after No. 58 passed. Other witnesses thought that the truck stopped as No. 58 was passing, and was then driven upon the crossing.

The signal maintainer said that he had last inspected the warning signals at the crossing about 10 a. m. on the day of the accident. The signals operated properly at that time. He arrived at the scene of the accident about 20 minutes after the accident occurred and found that the signal in the southeast angle of the intersection operated properly. The signal in the northwest angle of the intersection was demolished in the accident.

As a vehicle approaches the crossing from the south, the driver's view of an approaching west-bound train is obstructed by buildings in the southeast angle of the intersection. From points 40 feet, 30 feet, 20 feet, and 10 feet, respectively, south of the crossing, the driver of a vehicle can obtain a view of a west-bound train at points 226 feet, 425 feet, 960 feet, and 5,000 feet, respectively, east of the crossing.

#### Cause

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

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-eighth day of June, 1956.

By the Commission, Commissioner Clerke.

(SEAL)

HAROLD D. McCOY,

Secretary.