

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

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REPORT NO. 3731

CHICAGO, MILWAUKEE, ST. PAUL AND PACIFIC  
RAILROAD COMPANY

IN RE ACCIDENT

NEAR READS LANDING, MINN., ON

JANUARY 23, 1957

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## SUMMARY

Date: January 23, 1957

Railroad: Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific

Location: Reads Landing, Minn.

Kind of accident: Rear-end collision

Equipment involved: Track motor-car : Passenger train  
5034

Train number: : 16

Locomotive number: : Diesel-electric  
units 101A, 101B,  
and 96C

Consist: : 9 cars

Estimated speeds: 20 m. p. h. : 74 m. p. h.

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

Tracks: Double; tangent; level

Weather: Clear

Time: 11:15 a. m.

Casualties: 1 killed; 1 injured

Cause: Track motor-car occupying the main track  
on the time of an overdue first-class  
train

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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REPORT NO. 3731

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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February 19, 1957

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Accident near Reads Landing, Minn., on January 23, 1957,  
caused by a track motor-car occupying the main track  
on the time of an overdue first-class train.

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

TUGGLE, Commissioner:

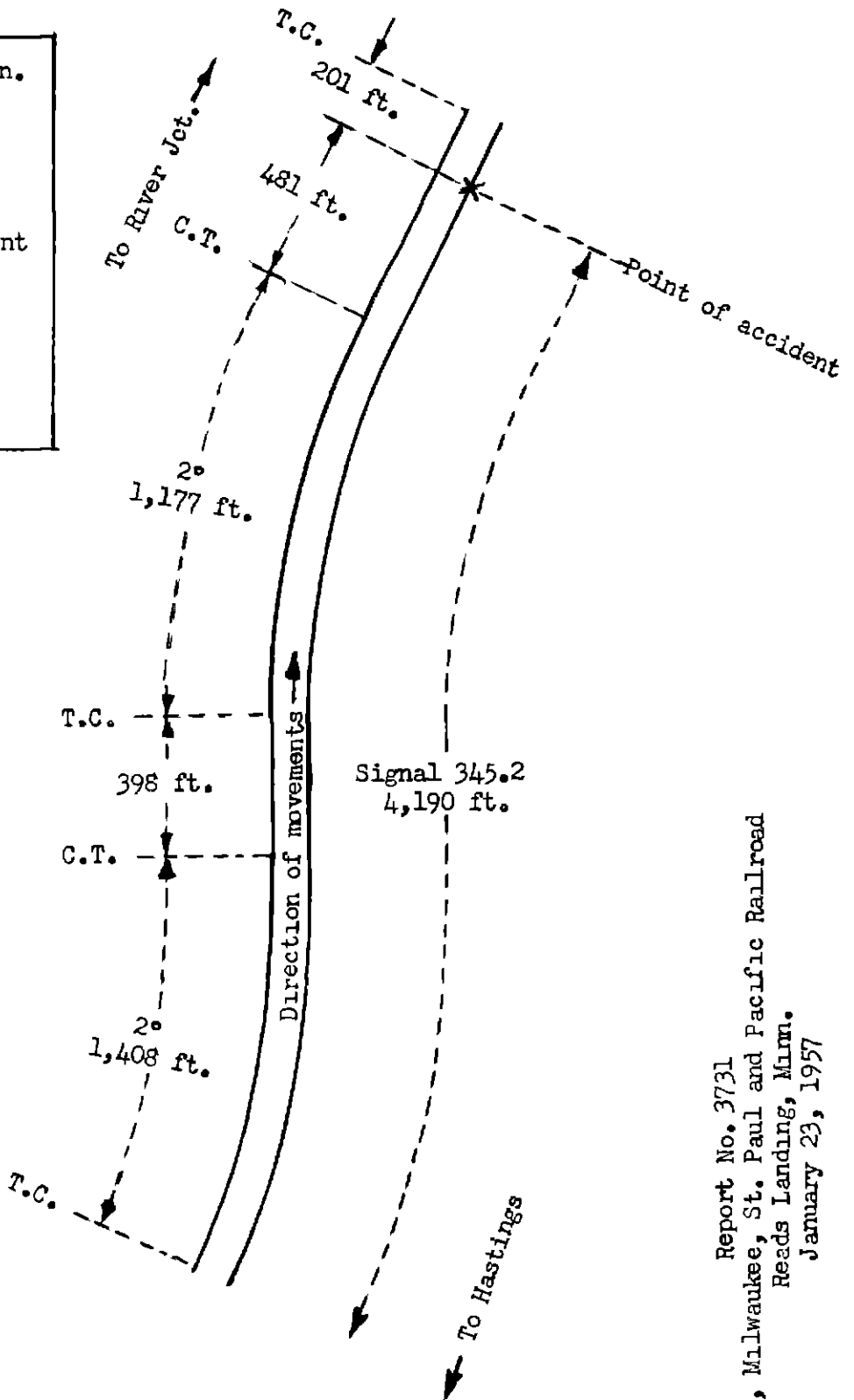
On January 23, 1957, there was a rear-end collision between a track motor-car and a passenger train on the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad near Reads Landing, Minn., which resulted in the death of one signal maintainer, and the injury of one lineman.

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

- River Jct., Minn. 56.4 mi.
- Wabasha 1.9 mi.
- Reads Landing 1.3 mi.
- X Point of accident 9.3 mi.
- Lake City 16.9 mi.
- Red Wing 20.4 mi.
- Hastings, Minn.



Report No. 3731  
Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad  
Reads Landing, Minn.  
January 23, 1957

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the La Crosse and River Division extending between Hastings and River Jct., Minn., 106.2 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a double-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders, and an automatic block-signal and cab-signal system. The accident occurred on the eastward main track at a point 46.6 miles east of Hastings and 1.3 miles west of Reads Landing. From the west there are, in succession, a 2° curve to the left 1,408 feet in length, a tangent 398 feet, a 2° curve to the right 1,177 feet, and a tangent 481 feet to the point of accident and 201 feet eastward. The grade is level.

In the vicinity of the point of accident the railroad parallels the Mississippi River on the south. Immediately west of the point of accident the range of vision along the tracks is considerably restricted by a hillside on the south side of the tracks.

Automatic signal 345.2, governing east-bound movements on the eastward main track, is located 4,190 feet west of the point of accident.

This carrier's rules for the operation of track motor-cars read in part as follows:

414. Employes operating track cars on main tracks shall, when practicable, obtain information in writing regarding trains, but such information will not relieve them of the responsibility of protecting the cars. They must see that the cars are clear of the track for trains.

\* \* \*

436. When riding track cars, a constant lookout must be kept at all times for approaching trains \* \* \*

444. When two or more employes are riding on a track car, each should occupy his designated place and one man \* \* \* must be assigned to face the rear to keep a constant lookout \* \* \*

The maximum authorized speeds in the vicinity of the point of accident are 70 miles per hour for passenger trains, 20 miles per hour for track motor-cars on tangent track, and 10 miles per hour for track motor-cars on curves.

### Description of Accident

About 11:10 a. m. track motor-car 5034, occupied by a signal maintainer and a lineman, departed east-bound on the eastward main track from a point 1.9 miles west of Reads Landing. Several minutes later, while it was moving at an estimated speed of 20 miles per hour, it was struck by No. 16. The accident occurred 1.3 miles west of Reads Landing.

No. 16, an east-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of Diesel-electric units 101A, 101B, and 96C, coupled in multiple-unit control, one baggage-dormitory car, three coaches, one dome coach, one dining car, two sleeping cars, and one observation car, in the order named. This train passed Hastings at 10:37 a. m., 3 hours 8 minutes late, passed Red Wing at 10:52 a. m., 3 hours 7 minutes late, and passed Lake City, the last open office, at 11:07 a. m., 3 hours 8 minutes late. Red Wing and Lake City are, respectively, 20.4 miles and 37.3 miles east of Hastings. It passed signal 345.2, which indicated Proceed, and while moving at a speed of approximately 74 miles per hour it struck track motor-car 5034.

The track motor-car was moved eastward a distance of 4,758 feet to the point at which the locomotive of No. 16 stopped. It was demolished. The front end of the locomotive was slightly damaged.

The signal maintainer was killed. The lineman was injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at 11:15 a. m.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 23.4 trains.

Track motor-car 5034, which was of the belt-drive type, was powered by a one-cylinder five to eight horsepower engine. It weighed 540 pounds, had seating capacity for two persons, and was equipped with an adjustable wind guard. Track motor-cars cannot be depended upon to shunt the track circuits of an automatic block-signal system, and the car involved was insulated so that it would not shunt a track circuit at any time.

Discussion

On the day of the accident the signal maintainer and the lineman reported for duty at Wabasha, 1.9 miles east of Reads Landing, at 8 a. m. The signal maintainer obtained a copy of a line-up which had been issued by the train dispatcher at 6:28 a. m. This line-up read in part as follows:

\* \* \*  
 East regular trains on time except  
 No 76           Wabasha       6:35 a. m.  
 No 264          Red Wing       9:50 a. m.  
                   Wabasha       10:20 a. m.  
 No 16           Red Wing       10:10 a. m.  
                   Wabasha       10:35 a. m.  
 No 266          Hastings      12:30 p. m.  
 \* \* \*

The signal maintainer and the lineman then proceeded to a point 1.9 miles west of Reads Landing on track motor-car 5034. No. 6, an east-bound passenger train, passed this point about 9:25 a. m. The lineman said that when the signal maintainer saw No. 6 he remarked that No. 16 had not yet passed. These employees completed their work at this point at 10:55 a. m. They planned to return to Wabasha, and the signal maintainer went to a telephone and called the operator at Wabasha to secure information concerning train movements. The lineman did not know whether the maintainer consulted the line-up which he had obtained at Wabasha earlier. The operator at Wabasha said that the signal maintainer asked him for information concerning No. 264 and No. 58, an east-bound passenger train due at Reads Landing at 11:51 a. m. The operator told the maintainer that No. 264 would be behind No. 58 and that No. 58 would be 5 or 10 minutes late. The operator said that No. 16 was not mentioned during this conversation. The signal maintainer returned to the track motor-car and told the lineman that No. 58 would be the next east-bound train. No. 16 was not mentioned. These employees placed the track motor-car on the eastward main track and proceeded eastward. The signal maintainer was operating the car. The lineman said that after the car passed the curve immediately west of the point of accident he heard the sound of a locomotive horn. He then saw No. 16 approaching. He thought that at this time the track motor-car was moving at a speed of approximately 20 miles per hour. He warned the signal maintainer and then alighted from the car immediately before the collision occurred.

As No. 16 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead from the control compartment at the front of the locomotive. The members of the train crew were in the cars of the train. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. The headlight was lighted. The enginemen said that the grade-crossing whistle signal was sounded for a rail-highway grade crossing 3,092 feet west of the point of accident. They first saw the track motor-car ahead at a distance which they thought was between 300 and 500 feet. When they saw the car the engineer immediately made an emergency application of the brakes and sounded a warning on the horn. The collision occurred before the speed had been appreciably reduced. According to the tape of the speed-recording device the speed was approximately 74 miles per hour when the brakes were applied.

The rules of this carrier provide that when operating their cars on main tracks the operators of track motor-cars must, when practicable, obtain information in writing regarding trains. The train dispatcher said that on the line on which the accident occurred it is customary to issue line-ups at approximately 6:30 a. m. and 11:30 a. m. and at other times when requested. In the instant case the signal maintainer obtained a line-up before he left Wabasha on the west-bound trip, and he obtained further information concerning train movements before beginning the east-bound trip. The line-up which he received at Wabasha indicated that No. 264 should be ahead of No. 16 and that both trains should have passed Wabasha at the time he called the operator for further information. Apparently at the time he talked with the operator he overlooked either the fact that No. 16 had not passed or the fact that No. 16 might be ahead of No. 264.

During the past 10 years the Commission has investigated 68 collisions, including the present case, in which track motor-cars were involved. These accidents resulted in the death of 92 persons and the injury of 194 persons.

#### Cause

This accident was caused by a track motor-car occupying the main track on the time of an overdue first-class train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this nineteenth day of February, 1957.

By the Commission, Commissioner Tuggle.

(SEAL)

HAROLD D. McCOY,

Secretary.