

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3697

CHICAGO, ROCK ISLAND AND PACIFIC
RAILROAD COMPANY

IN RE ACCIDENT

NEAR OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLA., ON

JUNE 17, 1956

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SUMMARY

Date: June 17, 1956

Railroad: Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific

Location: Oklahoma City, Okla.

Kind of accident: Collision

Equipment involved: Freight train : Motor-truck

Train number: Extra 453 West :

Locomotive number: Diesel-electric :
unit 453

Consist: 33 cars, caboose

Estimated speeds: 30 m. p. h. : 20-30 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and train orders

Track: Single; tangent; 0.17 percent
ascending grade westward

Highway: Tangent; crosses track at angle
of 20°17'; level

Weather: Clear

Time: 6:50 a. m.

Casualties 2 killed; 2 injured

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

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3697

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

CHICAGO, ROCK ISLAND AND PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY

August 24, 1956

Accident near Oklahoma City, Okla., on June 17, 1956, caused
by a motor-truck occupying a rail-highway grade crossing
immediately in front of an approaching train.

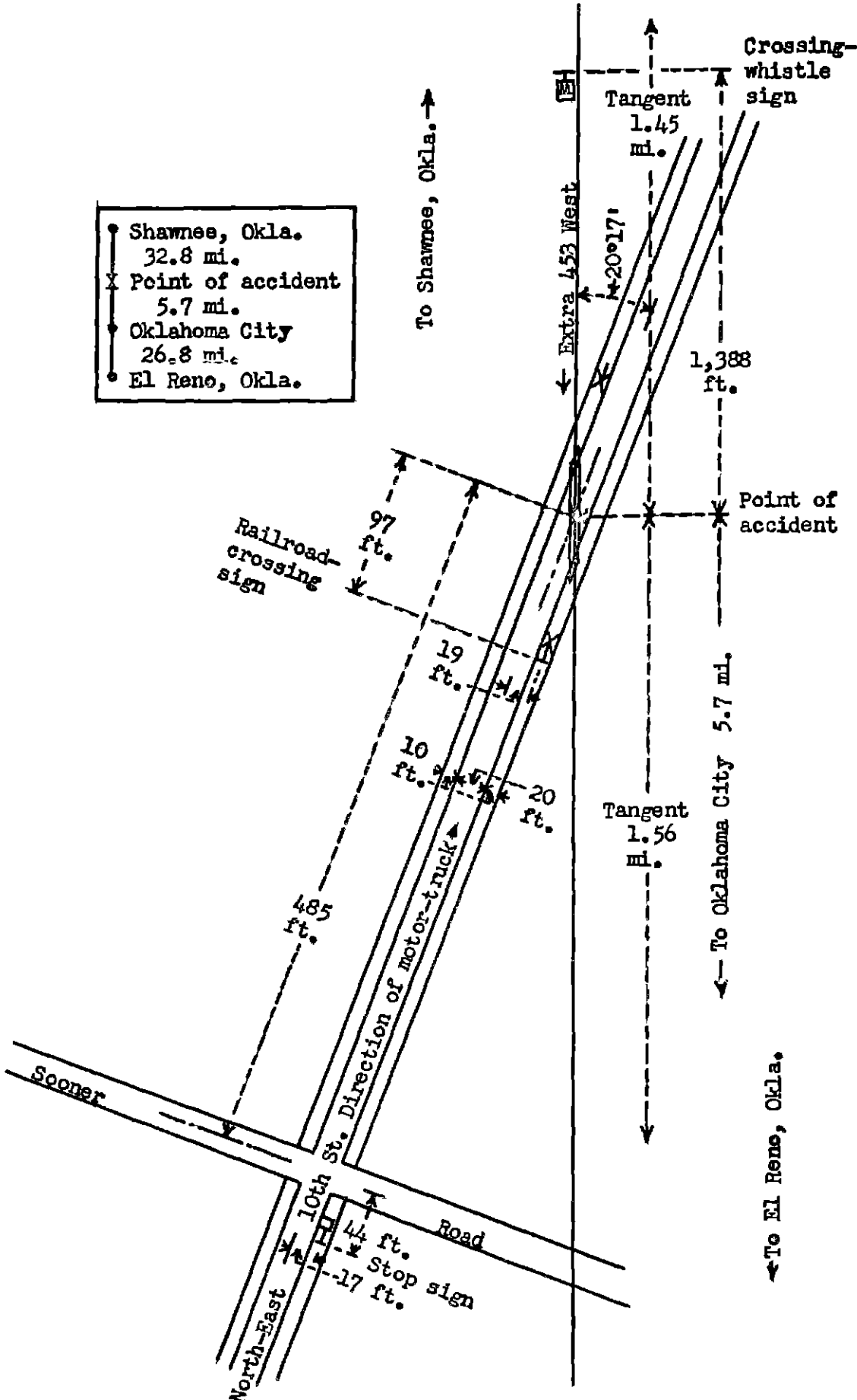
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

CLARKE, Commissioner:

On June 17, 1956, there was a collision between a freight train on the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad and a motor-truck at a rail-highway grade crossing near Oklahoma City, Okla., which resulted in the death of the driver of the motor-truck and one train-service employee, and the injury of two train-service employees.

¹
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.

- Shawnee, Okla.
32.8 mi.
- X Point of accident
5.7 mi.
- Oklahoma City
26.8 mi.
- El Reno, Okla.



← To El Reno, Okla.

Report No. 3697
 Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad
 Near Oklahoma City, Okla.
 June 17, 1956

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Southern Division extending between Shawnee and El Reno, Okla., 65.3 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. The accident occurred on the main track at a point 32.8 miles west of Shawnee and 5.7 miles east of Oklahoma City, where the railroad is crossed at grade by North-East 10th Street. The railroad is tangent throughout a distance of 1.45 miles immediately east of the point of accident and 1.56 miles westward. From the east the grade is level throughout a distance of 3,850 feet, and 0.17 percent ascending 200 feet to the crossing.

In the vicinity of the point of accident the railroad extends from northeast to southwest. A west-bound train by timetable direction moves toward the southwest. North-East 10th Street extends from west to east and intersects the railroad at an angle of $20^{\circ}17'$. North-East 10th Street is surfaced with bituminous material to a width of 20 feet. Dirt shoulders 10 feet in width are provided on each side of the bituminous surfacing. A 6-inch by 12-inch plank is laid on the gage side of each rail throughout the width of the crossing, and the remaining area of the crossing is surfaced with bituminous material to the level of the tops of the rails. North-East 10th Street is tangent throughout a considerable distance on each side of the crossing. The grade for east-bound vehicles is, successively, 0.50 percent ascending a distance of 400 feet, 1.50 percent ascending 100 feet, and level 100 feet to the crossing. North-East 10th Street intersects Sooner Road, a secondary county highway, at a point approximately 465 feet west of the railroad.

A standard crossbuck railroad-crossing sign is located in the southwest angle of the intersection of North-East 10th Street and the railroad. It is 19 feet south of the center-line of North-East 10th Street and 97 feet west of the center-line of the railroad. This sign is mounted on a mast approximately 9 feet 6 inches above the level of the highway and bears the words "RAILROAD CROSSING" in reflectorized black letters on a white background. A similar sign is located in the northeast angle of the intersection. A standard stop sign for highway traffic is located in the southwest angle of the intersection of Sooner Road and North-East 10th Street. It is 17 feet south of the center-line

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of North-East 10th Street, 44 feet west of the center-line of Sooner Road, and 529 feet west of the center-line of the railroad. A crossing-whistle sign for west-bound trains is located 1,388 feet east of the crossing.

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

14. Engine Horn or 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. (Standard sign will designate point at which signal must begin.) To be prolonged or repeated until crossing is occupied by engine or car.

* * *

* * *

17. Headlights.--The standard white headlight must be displayed brightly to the front of every train by day and by night.

* * *

30. Ringing Bell.--* * *, the engine bell must be rung when an engine is * * * approaching public crossings at grade, * * *.

The Uniform Act Regulating Traffic on Highways, State of Oklahoma, reads in part as follows:

ARTICLE XI

Special Stops Required

Sec. 94. Certain vehicles must stop at all railroad grade crossings.--

(a) The driver of any * * * vehicle carrying * * * flammable liquids, as a cargo or part of a cargo, before crossing at a grade any track or tracks of a railroad, shall stop such vehicle within fifty (50) feet but not

less than fifteen (15) 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 for signals indicating the approach of a train, * * * and shall not proceed until he can do so safely. * * *

* * *

The maximum authorized speed for freight trains in the vicinity of the point of accident is 45 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

Extra 453 West, a west-bound freight train, consisted of Diesel-electric unit 453, a road-switcher type, 33 cars, and a caboose. This train departed from Shawnee at 4:45 a. m., and while moving at an estimated speed of 30 miles per hour it struck a motor-truck at a rail-highway grade crossing 32.8 miles west of Shawnee and 5.7 miles east of Oklahoma City, where the railroad is crossed at grade by North-East 10th Street.

The vehicle involved was a 1949 Dodge tank truck owned by the Rob-Lon Oil Company, Inc., Oklahoma City, Okla. It bore Oklahoma license No. 317T421. The driver, who was the sole occupant, held 1956 Oklahoma commercial chauffeur's license No. 17225. The truck was powered by a six-cylinder engine and was equipped with hydraulic brakes supplemented by a vacuum booster. It had single axles at the front and rear, and dual wheels and tires at the rear. The overall length of the truck was approximately 37 feet. The cargo tank consisted of five compartments welded integrally. The compartments had a combined capacity of 2,174 gallons. At the time of the accident the tank was loaded to capacity with gasoline. The cargo had been loaded at a station of the owner of the truck located about 6 miles southwest of the point of accident and was destined to other stations in the area. This vehicle was moving eastward on North-East 10th Street at an estimated speed of from 20 to 30 miles per hour when it entered the crossing and was struck by Extra 453 West.

The cargo tank of the truck was torn loose from the frame, and the wreckage stopped on the south side of North-East 10th Street and a short distance west of the crossing. Several compartments of the tank were ruptured in the collision, escaping gasoline became ignited, and the truck was

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destroyed by fire. Extra 453 West stopped with the front of the locomotive 862 feet west of the crossing. No equipment of the train was derailed. The front end of the locomotive was somewhat damaged in the collision, and the locomotive was badly damaged by fire. The first, second, seventeenth, and nineteenth cars were slightly damaged by fire, and the wooden side planking of the eighteenth car was consumed by fire.

The front brakeman of Extra 453 West was killed. The engineer and the fireman were injured.

The weather was clear and it was daylight at the time of the accident, which occurred about 5:50 a. m.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident the average daily movement over the crossing was 8.03 trains. During the 24-hour period beginning at 12:01 a. m., June 21, 1956, 3,535 automobiles, 466 motor-trucks, and 1 bus passed over the crossing.

Discussion

As Extra 453 West was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 30 miles per hour, as estimated by the engineer. The enginemen and the front brakeman were in the control compartment of the locomotive, and the conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. The brakes of the train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. The headlight was lighted. The engineer said that he began to sound the grade-crossing whistle signal when the locomotive was in the vicinity of the crossing-whistle sign, and that he continued the signal until the locomotive reached the crossing. The locomotive bell was ringing during this time. The engineer said that when the locomotive reached a point between 500 and 700 feet east of the crossing he saw the motor-truck approaching from the west. He thought that at this time the truck was 500 or 600 feet west of the crossing. He continued to watch the truck, and when it reached a point about 150 feet west of the crossing he saw that it would not stop short of the crossing. He then made an emergency application of the brakes. The collision occurred several seconds later. The engineer said that there was no apparent reduction in the speed of the truck before the accident occurred. From the fireman's position on the locomotive the truck was not visible before it reached the crossing.

A witness to the accident was standing south of North-East 10th Street and about 750 feet east of the crossing. He said he heard the sound of the pneumatic horn of Extra 453 West when the train was a considerable distance east of the crossing and also as the train was closely approaching the crossing. He thought that the motor-truck stopped before entering the intersection of North-East 10th Street and Sooner Road, and he said that after leaving this point the truck did not again stop before reaching the railroad. According to the statements of the engineer the speed of the truck was approximately the same as that of the train, but this witness thought that the speed of the truck was not in excess of 20 miles per hour. He said that there were no other vehicles in the immediate vicinity when the accident occurred.

There are several trees in the northeast angle of the intersection of North-East 10th Street and Sooner Road. With the exception of the points from which the view is somewhat obstructed by these trees and by a pole line located 38 feet north of the track, the driver of a vehicle moving eastward on North-East 10th Street has an unobstructed view of an approaching west-bound train. With these exceptions, between points 600 feet and 350 feet west of the crossing an approaching west-bound train is visible throughout a distance of approximately 3,000 feet, and throughout a distance of 300 feet immediately west of the crossing an approaching train is visible throughout a distance of approximately 5,000 feet.

The driver of the motor-truck had been employed in this capacity by the motor carrier since August 1955. Prior to this employment he had had several years experience in driving gasoline transport trucks for other companies. He was familiar with the route he was using at the time of the accident.

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-fourth day of August, 1956.

By the Commissioner, Commissioner Clarke.

(SEAL)

HAROLD D. McCOY,

Secretary.