

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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REPORT NO. 3430  
CHICAGO, ROCK ISLAND AND PACIFIC  
RAILROAD COMPANY  
IN RE ACCIDENT  
NEAR ELBING, KANS., ON  
SEPTEMBER 1, 1951

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SUMMARY

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Date: September 1, 1951

Railroad: Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific

Location: Elbing, Kans.

Kind of accident: Collision

Equipment involved: Passenger train : Motor-truck

Train number: 509 :

Engine number: Diesel-electric :  
unit 625

Consist: 4 cars :

Estimated speeds: 75 m. p. h. : 25 m. p. h.

Operation: Signal indications

Track: Single; tangent; 0.60 percent  
ascending grade southward

Highway: Tangent; crosses track at angle of  
90°; 1.5 percent ascending grade  
westward

Weather: Clear

Time: 12:35 p. m.

Casualties: 1 killed; 108 injured

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

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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REPORT NO. 3430

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

CHICAGO, ROCK ISLAND AND PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY

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November 13, 1951

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Accident near Elbing, Kans., on September 1, 1951, caused  
by a motor-truck occupying a rail-highway grade  
crossing immediately in front of an approaching train.

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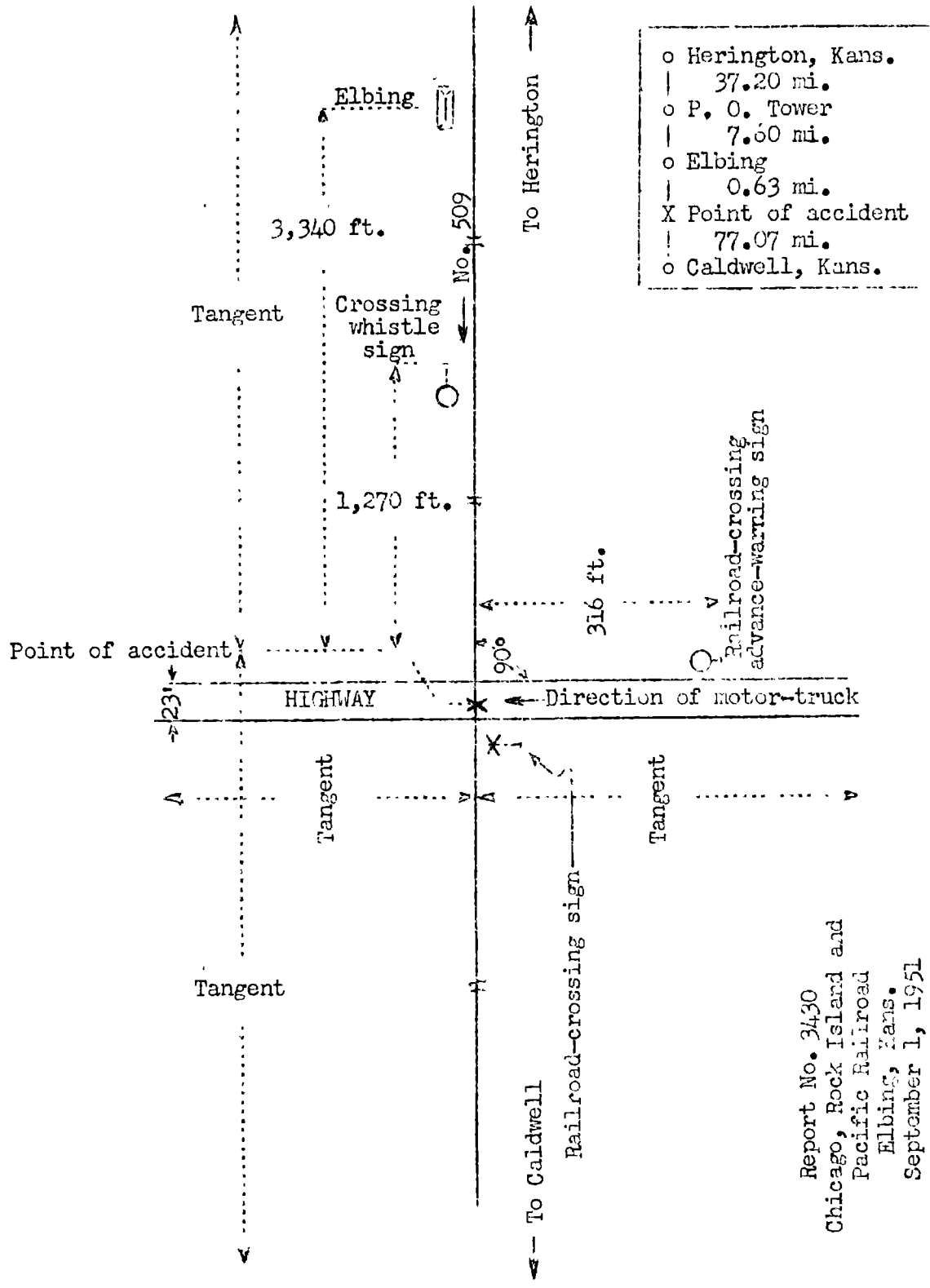
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION<sup>1</sup>

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On September 1, 1951, there was a collision between a passenger train on the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad and a motor-truck at a rail-highway grade crossing near Elbing, Kans., which resulted in the death of 1 passenger, and the injury of 97 passengers, 6 dining-car employees, 1 lounge-car attendant, 1 chair-car attendant, and 3 train-service employees.

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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 Patterson for consideration and disposition.



Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Oklahoma Division extending between Herington and Caldwell, Kans., 122.5 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line, over which trains are operated by signal indications. The accident occurred on the main track at a rail-highway grade crossing located 45.43 miles south of Herington and 3,340 feet south of the station at Elbing. The track is tangent throughout a distance of several miles on each side of the crossing. The grade varies between level and 0.60 percent ascending southward throughout a distance of 1 mile immediately north of the crossing, and is 0.60 percent ascending southward at the crossing. The highway intersects the track at an angle of 90 degrees, and is tangent throughout a considerable distance on each side of the crossing. It is 23 feet in width and is surfaced with a bituminous mixture. The grade for west-bound vehicles averages 1.3 percent ascending throughout a distance of 1,500 feet immediately east of the crossing, and is 1.5 percent ascending at the crossing. The surface of the crossing is practically level with the tops of the rails.

A circular railroad-crossing advance-warning sign 2 feet in diameter is located to the right of the direction of west-bound highway traffic, 13 feet north of the center-line of the highway and 316 feet east of the crossing. This sign is mounted on a mast 4 feet above the level of the highway. It bears a vertical and a horizontal line, which intersect at the center of the sign, and the letters "RR" in black on a yellow background. A standard cross-buck railroad-crossing sign is located in the southeast angle of the intersection, 24 feet south of the center-line of the highway and 20 feet east of the center-line of the track. This sign is mounted on a mast 10 feet above the level of the highway and bears the words "RAILROAD CROSSING" in black on a white background. A crossing-whistle sign for south-bound trains is located 1,270 feet north 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.  
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30. Ringing Bell.--\* \* \* the engine bell must be rung \* \* \* while approaching and passing public crossings at grade \* \* \*

The maximum authorized speed for the train involved was 79 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

No. 509, a south-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of Diesel-electric unit 625, one dining car, two coaches, and one lounge-observation car, in the order named. The dining car and the first coach were articulated. All cars were of lightweight steel construction. All units of the train were equipped with tightlock couplers. This train passed P. O. Tower, 7.6 miles north of Elbing and the last station at which the time was recorded on the traingraph of the traffic-control machine, at 12:28 p. m., 24 minutes late, and while moving at a speed of about 75 miles per hour it struck a motor-truck on a rail-highway grade crossing 3,340 feet south of the station at Elbing.

The vehicle involved was a tractor and a semi-trailer, owned by R. H. Fulton and Co., Lubbock, Tex. The driver, who was the sole occupant, held Kentucky chauffeur's license No. 10597. The tractor was a 1946 White six-cylinder Model WA 22, and bore Kentucky license T44-578 and Tennessee license 17P/7-520. It was equipped with dual tires on the rear wheels and was provided with an enclosed steel cab. The semi-trailer was of special design for transporting heavy equipment and was equipped with tandem axles at the rear and dual tires on each wheel. Both the tractor and the semi-trailer were equipped with air-operated brakes on all wheels. At the time of the accident the cargo consisted of a power shovel weighing 26,000 pounds.

It was loaded at Halls, Tenn., and was en route to Newton, Kans. The total weight of the tractor, semi-trailer, and cargo was 58,000 pounds. The total length of the tractor and semi-trailer, coupled, was 51 feet. This vehicle was moving westward on the highway at an estimated speed of 25 miles per hour when it entered upon the crossing and was struck by No. 509.

The entire train of No. 509 was derailed. A separation occurred between the second and the third cars. The Diesel-electric unit and the first two cars stopped on their right sides, with the front of the Diesel-electric unit 838 feet south of the crossing and about 10 feet west of the center-line of the track, and the rear end of the second car about 25 feet west of the center-line of the track. The third and the fourth cars stopped upright and approximately in line with the track, with the front end of the third car about 6 feet west of the center-line of the track and 439 feet south of the crossing. Two large holes were torn through the left side of the Diesel-electric unit, the pilot and both trucks were torn off, and the underframe was badly damaged. Two holes were torn through the left side of the first car, and the car was otherwise badly damaged. The second car was badly damaged, and the third and fourth cars were considerably damaged.

The tractor stopped on the south edge of the highway and 12 feet west of the center-line of the track. The rear end was destroyed, and it was otherwise badly damaged. The semi-trailer stopped 138 feet south of the highway and 12 feet east of the center-line of the track. The front end was destroyed, and the frame was badly bent. The power shovel was torn from the semi-trailer and stopped 84 feet south of the crossing and 16 feet east of the track. The shovel, frame, and caterpillar tread were torn off, and the mechanism was badly damaged.

The fireman, the conductor, and the flagman were injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 12:35 p. m.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement over the crossing was 14.1 trains. During the 24-hour period beginning at 12:01 a. m., September 7, 1951, 409 automobiles, 205 trucks, and 5 buses passed over the crossing.

Discussion

As No. 509 was approaching the crossing where the accident occurred the speed was about 75 miles per hour. The engineer, the fireman, and an engineer who was qualifying for passenger service were maintaining a lookout ahead from the control compartment of the Diesel-electric unit. The members of the train crew were in various locations throughout the cars of the train. The headlight was lighted brightly. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. The employees on the Diesel-electric unit said that when the front of the train was in the vicinity of the crossing-whistle sign the engineer sounded the grade-crossing whistle signal and completed the last blast at the crossing, and that during this time the bell was ringing. These employees said that when the train was about one-half mile north of the crossing they observed the motor-truck approaching from the east. They assumed that the motor-truck would stop short of the crossing if there was insufficient time for it to cross in front of their train. When the train was about 200 feet north of the crossing, they became aware that the motor-truck would not be stopped short of the crossing. The engineer then made an emergency application of the brakes. The collision occurred immediately afterward and before the speed of the train had been reduced.

The driver of the motor-truck had been driving the same tractor during a period of several years, but he said he had never before driven over the highway on which the accident occurred. As the motor-truck approached the crossing the driver could have obtained an unobstructed view of the track throughout a considerable distance north of the crossing, but he did not recall having noticed the railroad-crossing warning signs and he was not aware that the motor-truck was approaching a rail-highway grade crossing until the tractor was about to cross the track. He did not see or hear the approaching train before the accident occurred.



Cause

It is found that 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 thirteenth day of November, 1951.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,  
Secretary.