

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2863
THE CHICAGO, ROCK ISLAND & PACIFIC
RAILWAY COMPANY

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT

AT FLAGLER, COLO., ON

JANUARY 20, 1945

SUMMARY

Railroad: Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific
Date: January 20, 1945
Location: Flagler, Colo.
Kind of accident: Head-end collision
Trains involved: Freight : Freight
Train numbers: Extra 2701 West : 92
Engine numbers: 2701 : 2712-2703
Consist: 45 cars, caboose : 41 cars, caboose
Estimated speed: Standing : 15 m. p. h.
Operation: Timetable and train orders, and
manual-block system for following
movements only
Track: Single; 1°30' curve; 0.26 percent
descending grade eastward
Weather: Snowing
Time: 1:27 a. m.
Casualties: 2 killed; 5 injured
Cause: Failure to obey right-of-track order
Recommendation: That the Chicago, Rock Island &
Pacific Railway Company install
an adequate block system on the
main line of the division on which
this accident occurred

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2863

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

THE CHICAGO, ROCK ISLAND & PACIFIC RAILWAY COMPANY

March 13, 1945.

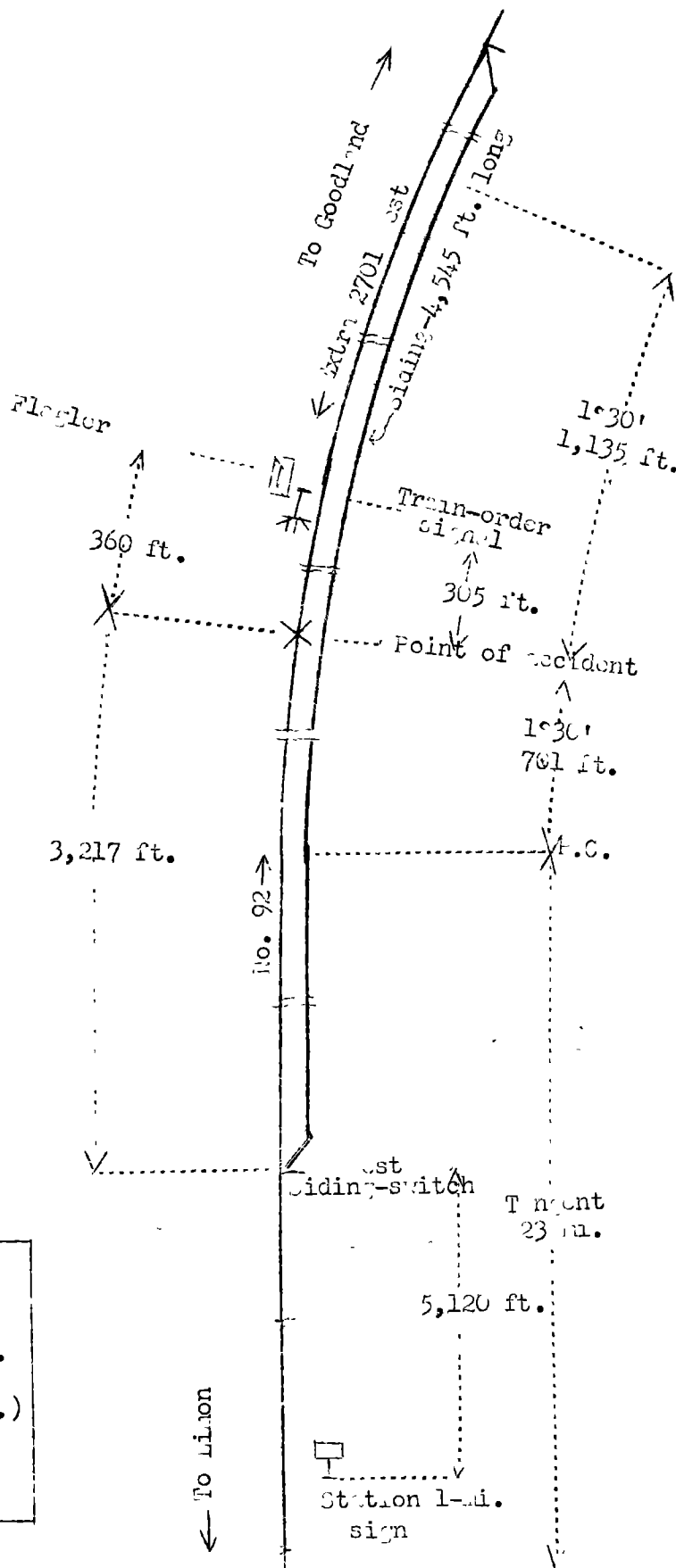
Accident at Flagler, Colo., on January 20, 1945, caused
by failure to obey a right-of-track order.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On January 20, 1945, there was a head-end collision between two freight trains on the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway at Flagler, Colo., which resulted in the death of two employees and the injury of five employees.

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.



- Goodland, Kans. 29.9 mi.
- Burlington, Colo. 4.6 mi.
- Flagler (F. of A.) 33.5 mi.
- Limon, Colo.

Inv. No. 2363
 Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific
 Railway
 Flagler, Colo.
 January 20, 1945

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Western Division designated as Subdivision 9 and extending eastward from Limon, Colo., to Goodland, Kans., 107 miles. This was a single-track line over which trains were operated by timetable and train orders, and a manual-block system for following movements only. At Flagler, 33.5 miles east of Limon, a siding 4,545 feet long paralleled the main track on the south. The west switch of this siding was 3,577 feet west of the station. The accident occurred on the main track 3,217 feet east of the west siding-switch. From the west the main track was tangent throughout a distance of 23 miles, then there was a 1°30' curve to the right 701 feet to the point of accident and 1,135 feet eastward. The grade for east-bound trains varied between 0.276 percent and 0.823 percent descending throughout a distance of 4,400 feet, then it was descending, successively, 1 percent 5,600 feet, 0.76 percent 400 feet and 0.26 percent 290 feet to the point of accident and 410 feet beyond.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

14. Engine Whistle Signals.

NOTE.--The signals prescribed are illustrated by "o" for snort sounds; "___" for longer sounds.
* * *

Sound.	Indication.
* * *	
(n) ___ ___ o	Approaching meeting or waiting points. See Rule S-90.

* * *

S-71. A train is superior to another train by right, class or direction.

Right is conferred by train order; class and direction by time-table.

Right is superior to class or direction.

* * *

S-90. * * *

* * * the engineman will give signal 14 (n) at least one mile before reaching a meeting or waiting point.

Should engineman fail to give this signal or fail to prepare to stop short of fouling point, when required, the conductor must take immediate action to stop the train.

204. * * *

* * *

Enginemen and firemen and, when practicable, forward trainman must read train orders, check with each other and have a definite and proper understanding of their requirements. Conductors and, when practicable, trainmen, must read train orders, check with each other and have a definite and proper understanding of their requirements.

204 (a). In addition to copies of all train orders and clearances delivered to each employe addressed, an extra copy will be furnished the engineman, and a copy to rear trainman. When a train has more than one engine in service, two copies will be furnished engineman on each engine.

S-208. A train order to be sent to two or more offices * * *

The several addresses * * * when practicable, must include the operator at * * * the last named station in a Form S-C train order, * * *

* * *

221 (a). Train dispatcher, to advance a train beyond a station where it is restricted for a train, will * * * issue an order, * * * to operator to display "calling on" indication of train order signal, * * *

* * *

The train-order signal at Flagler was mounted on a mast located on the north side of the main track opposite the station. The night aspects and corresponding indications and names of this signal were as follows:

<u>Aspect</u>	<u>Indication</u>	<u>Name</u>
Green	Proceed "No orders"	Clear train order signal.
Yellow	Advance on main track to train order signal.	Calling on train order signal (See Rule 221(a)).
Red	Stop-orders for train.	Stop train order signal * * *

FORMS OF
TRAIN ORDERS.

* * *

S-C.

Giving Right Over An Opposing Train.

* * *

(2) Extra 37 north has right over No 3 Eng
39 F to C.

The regular train must not leave the point last named until the extra train has arrived, unless directed by train order to do so.

These orders give right to the train first named over the other train between the points named. If the trains meet at either of the designated points, the first-named train must take the siding, unless the order otherwise prescribes.

* * *

The maximum authorized speed for freight trains having two engines coupled was 40 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

At Burlington, 43.6 miles east of Flagler, the crew of Extra 2701 West, a west-bound freight train, received copies of train order No. 282, Form 19, reading as follows:

Extra 2701 West has right over No 92
Engs 2712 and 2703 Burlington to
Flagler Extra 2701 West hold main
track at Flagler

Extra 2701 West, consisting of engine 2701, 45 cars and a caboose, stopped on the main track at Flagler at 1:10 a. m., with the engine standing 3,217 feet east of the west siding-switch. About 17 minutes later the engine was struck by No. 92.

At Limon the crew of No. 92, an east-bound second-class freight train, received copies of train order No. 282. This train, consisting of engines 2712 and 2703, 41 cars and a caboose, departed from Limon at 12:40 a. m., 1 hour 10 minutes late, passed the west siding-switch at Flagler, where it was required to enter the siding and to remain clear of the main track until Extra 2701 West had passed the east siding-switch, and while moving at an estimated speed of 15 miles per hour it struck Extra 2701 West.

The force of the impact moved Extra 2701 eastward about 170 feet. The engine and 5 cars of Extra 2701, and both engines and 12 cars of No. 92 were derailed and were damaged.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 12.9 trains.

It was snowing at the time of the accident, which occurred about 1:27 a. m.

The fireman of the second engine and the front brakeman of No. 92 were killed. The engineer, the fireman and the front brakeman of Extra 2701, and the engineer and the fireman of the first engine of No. 92 were injured.

Discussion

The crew of each train and the operator at Flagler held copies of train order No. 282, which gave Extra 2701 West right over No. 92 Burlington to Flagler and included the instruction for Extra 2701 West to hold the main track at Flagler. The train-order signal at Flagler displayed stop.

Extra 2701 West stopped on the main track at Flagler about 1:10 a. m., with the engine standing 305 feet west of the train-order signal and 3,217 feet east of the west siding-switch. All the surviving employees concerned understood that, under the rules, train order No. 282 required No. 92 to enter the siding at the west switch to clear for Extra 2701 West. About 17 minutes after Extra 2701 West stopped at Flagler the engine was struck by No. 92.

The members of the crew of Extra 2701 who were in the vicinity of the front end of their train first saw the reflection of the headlight of the approaching train about 1-mile distant. Although they thereafter observed the progress of the approaching train, they were not aware that No. 92 had passed the west

siding-switch and had proceeded on the main track until just before the collision occurred. The headlight of Extra 2701 was lighted brightly. The lamp on the switch-stand of the west switch of the siding was lighted and displayed green.

As No. 92 was approaching Flagler the speed was about 40 miles per hour. The train-brake system was in the charge of the engineer of the first engine. The brakes had been tested and had functioned properly at all points where used en route. The engineer of each engine said that, because their view of the track ahead was obscured by trailing smoke and steam, they were depending upon their respective firemen to maintain a lookout ahead. When the engines were in the vicinity of the station one-mile sign, located 5,120 feet west of the west siding-switch, the smoke lifted momentarily, and the engineer of the first engine saw this sign. He said that he sounded the meeting-point signal in this vicinity and made a 10 or 12-pound brake-pipe reduction, which was not released. From this point eastward to a point about 900 feet west of the point where the accident occurred, trailing smoke and steam again obscured the view of the track ahead from the right sides of the engines. Then the engineer of the first engine saw the reflection of the headlight of the opposing train, and he immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position in an unsuccessful attempt to avert the accident. The engineer of the second engine said that he was not aware of anything being wrong until just before the collision occurred. The fireman of the first engine said that he called a warning to the engineer soon after the engines passed the west siding-switch, but he took no further action to stop the train. The conductor and the flagman, who were in the caboose, said they were aware that their train was proceeding on the main track east of the west siding-switch, but they did not take action to stop the train because they thought the train-order signal was visible to the employees on the engines, and that the signal was displaying yellow, which would have permitted their train to proceed on the main track to the signal.

The manual-block system used on this line applies to following movements only. There was no provision for the blocking of opposing movements. If an adequate block system had been in use in this territory, these trains would not have been permitted to occupy the same block simultaneously, and this accident would not have occurred.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to obey a right-of-track-order.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway Company install an adequate block system on the main line of the division on which this accident occurred. A rule to show cause why it should not do so will be served on said carrier.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this thirteenth day of March, 1945.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.