

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2943

THE DELAWARE AND HUDSON RAILROAD CORPORATION

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT

NEAR COOPERSTOWN JCT., N. Y., ON

OCTOBER 30, 1945

SUMMARY

Railroad: Delaware and Hudson
Date: October 30, 1945
Location: Cooperstown Jct., N. Y.
Kind of accident: Rear-end collision
Equipment involved: Track motor-car : Freight train
Train number: : Extra 536 South
Engine number: : 536
Consist: Motor-car 586, : 9 cars, 1 passenger-
trailer : baggage car
Estimated speed: Unknown : 40 m. p. h.
Operation: Timetable, train orders and
automatic block-signal system
Track: Double; 3° curve; 0.38 percent
descending grade southward
Weather: Clear
Time: 4:55 p. m.
Casualties: 3 killed; 1 injured
Cause: Failure to provide adequate pro-
tection for movement of track
motor-car
Recommendation: That the Delaware and Hudson Rail-
road Corporation provide adequate
protection for the movement of
track motor-cars on its line

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2943

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

THE DELAWARE AND HUDSON RAILROAD CORPORATION

December 4, 1945.

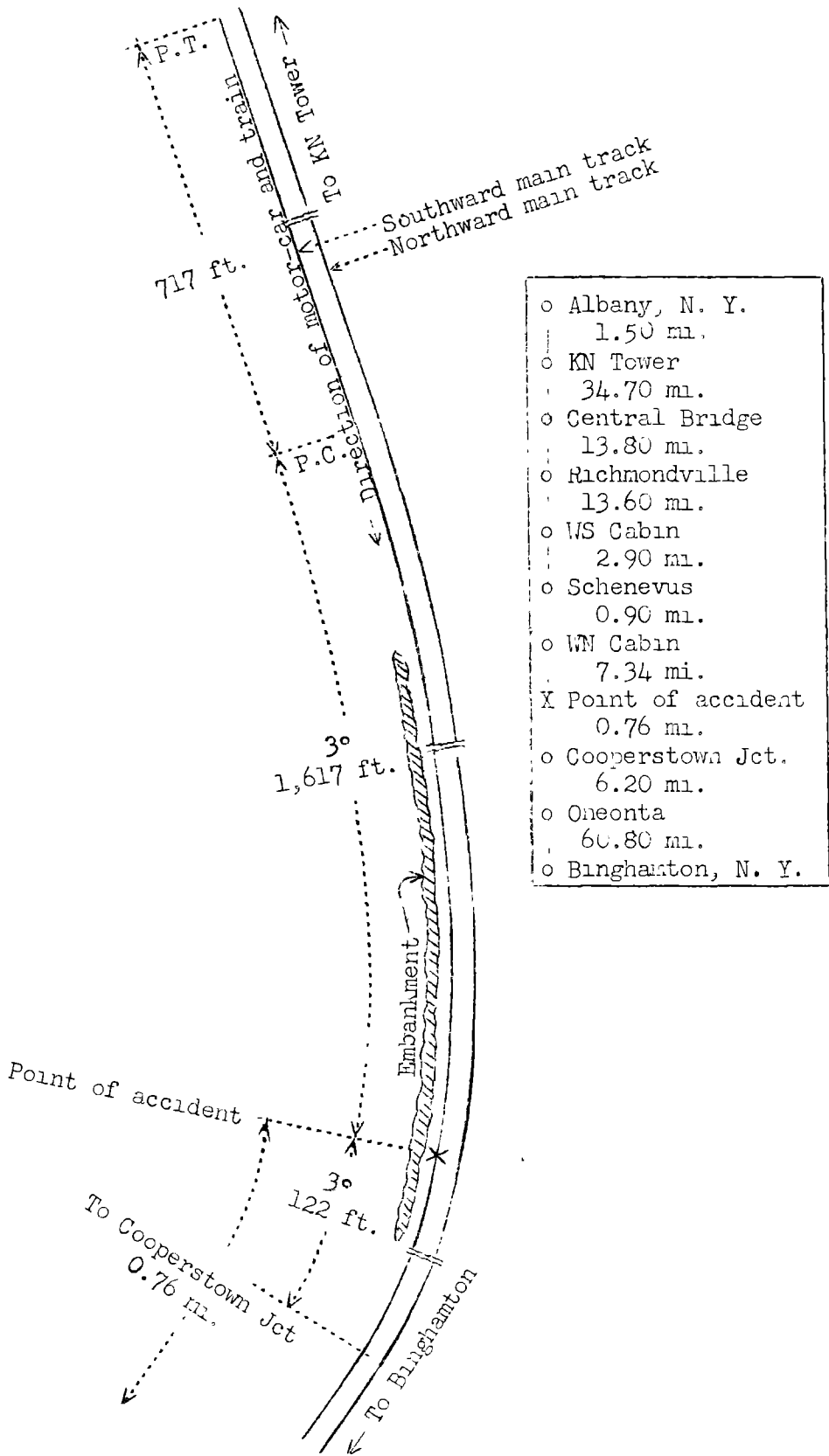
Accident near Cooperstown Jct., N. Y., on October 30, 1945,
caused by failure to provide adequate protection for
the movement of a track motor-car.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On October 30, 1945, there was a rear-end collision between a track motor-car and a freight train on the line of the Delaware and Hudson Railroad Corporation near Cooperstown Jct., N. Y., which resulted in the death of three employees, and the injury of one employee.

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.



Inv. No. 2943
 Delaware and Hudson Railroad Corporation
 Cooperstown Jct., N. Y.
 October 30, 1945

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Susquehanna Division extending between KN Tower, near Albany, and Binghamton N. Y., 141 miles, a double-track line in the vicinity of the point of accident, over which trains moving with the current of traffic are operated by timetable, train orders and an automatic block-signal system. The accident occurred on the southward main track 73.24 miles south of KN Tower, at a point 0.76 mile north of Cooperstown Jct. From the north there is a tangent 717 feet in length, which is followed by a 3° curve to the right 1,617 feet to the point of accident and 122 feet southward. The grade is 0.38 percent descending southward.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

14. Engine Whistle Signals.

Note.--The signals prescribed are illustrated by "o" for short sounds; "—" for longer sounds.

* * *

* * *

A succession of short sounds of the whistle is an alarm * * *

99. When a train stops or is delayed, under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must go back immediately with stop signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection, and place and leave two torpedoes on the rail. * * *

* * *

99a. When conditions require it a fusee must be used. A train finding a fusee burning on the engineer's side within the right-of-way, must, after having stopped, proceed cautiously, looking out for a stop signal.

Instructions governing operation of track motor-cars read in part as follows:

8. Track car drivers must keep themselves informed as to train movements, to be on constant lookout and occupy track only when it is safe to do so. When a "Line up" of train movements is obtained it must not be considered final because operating conditions may require running of additional trains or change in "line up".

25. All persons riding on self-propelled cars must be seated when car is in motion and so placed that an unobstructed view in both directions may be had by the driver.

35. The following signal equipment must be carried on all self-propelled cars:

- 2 - Red Flags
- 12 - Torpedoes
- 6 - Fusees
- 2 - Red Lights
- 2 - White Lights

The maximum authorized speed for the freight train was 40 miles per hour and for the motor car, 25 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

Track motor-car 586 and a trailer, in the order named, departed south-bound from Central Bridge, 39.3 miles north of Cooperstown Jct., about 3 p. m., passed Extra 536 South at Richmondville, 25.5 miles north of Cooperstown Jct., passed WN Cabin, the last open office, 8.1 miles north of Cooperstown Jct., about 4:20 p. m., and while moving on the southward main track at an unknown speed it was struck by Extra 536 South.

Extra 536 South, a south-bound freight train, consisting of engine 536, 9 freight cars and one passenger-baggage car, in the order named, departed from Richmondville at 3:40 p. m., passed WN Cabin at 4:43 p. m., and while moving at an estimated speed of 40 miles per hour it struck track motor-car 586.

The trailer was detached from motor-car 586, and was demolished. Motor-car 586 continued southward unattended and collided with a cut of cars at a point 8.66 miles south of the point of accident, and was badly damaged. The front end of the engine of Extra 536 was slightly damaged.

The weather was clear and it was dusk at the time of the accident, which occurred about 4:55 p. m.

The employees killed and injured were members of a force of painters.

According to data furnished by the railroad, motor-car 586 was of the 4-wheel type, weighed 1,800 pounds, and was 8 feet 11-3/4 inches in length. It was powered by a 36-horsepower gasoline motor, and the transmission was of the shaft type. It was equipped with a canopy-type top, which was 6 feet 7-1/4 inches above the tops of the rails, and with windshields at each end of the car. The trailer was of the 4-wheel tray-deck type. The deck was 1 foot 7 inches above the tops of the rails. The motor-car and the trailer were insulated to prevent the shunting of signal track circuits.

Discussion

The investigation disclosed that a force of painters, consisting of a foreman and three hands, was temporarily engaged in painting a bridge at a point about 39 miles north of Cooperstown Jct. and on the day of the accident was proceeding on track motor-car 586, which was hauling an empty trailer from the point

of work to Oneonta, 6.2 miles south of Cooperstown Jct. About 3 p. m. the train dispatcher authorized the foreman to proceed southward from Central Bridge to Oneonta, a distance of 45.5 miles. The motor-car which was being operated by the foreman, then proceeded. At Richmondville motor-car 586 passed Extra 536 South, which was performing switching service, and continued to proceed southward. About 4:05 p. m. the foreman called the train dispatcher by telephone from WS Cabin, 11.9 miles north of Cooperstown Jct., and received permission to proceed on the southward main track. At this time the dispatcher informed the foreman that Extra 536 was 7 miles north of WS Cabin. At 4:20 p. m. the foreman called the dispatcher from WN Cabin, 8.1 miles north of Cooperstown Jct., and received permission to proceed southward. At this time the dispatcher informed the foreman that Extra 536 was 5.9 miles north of WN Cabin and would perform switching service at Schonevus, 0.9 mile north of WN Cabin. Motor-car 586 proceeded south of WN Cabin, and about 4:55 p. m., while moving at an unknown speed, it was struck by Extra 536 at a point 0.76 mile north of Cooperstown Jct.

Extra 536 passed WN Cabin at 4:43 p. m. Between WN Cabin and the point of accident this train passed three automatic signals, which displayed proceed. However, the motor-car and trailer were so insulated that they would not shunt the signal track circuits. As Extra 536 was approaching the point of accident the speed was about 40 miles per hour in territory where the maximum authorized speed was 40 miles per hour. No train order had been issued restricting the authority of this train to proceed at the maximum authorized speed. The engine-men were maintaining a lookout ahead, and the first that these employees were aware of anything being wrong was when the engineer saw motor-car 586 about 400 feet distant. He immediately placed the brake valve in emergency position and sounded the alarm whistle signal. The accident occurred before the speed of the train became reduced. Because of track curvature and an embankment about 25 feet in height on the inside of the curve, the view of the point of accident from a south-bound engine was materially restricted. At Richmondville the crew of Extra 536 had observed the track motor-car as it proceeded southward ahead of their train, but they expected that the motor-car would be protected.

The movements of track motor-cars are authorized orally by the train dispatcher, and an oral line-up of the movement of trains within a limited territory is given the operator of a track motor-car. Train crews are not given information about line-ups authorized to motor-car operators. The rules for the operation of track motor-cars provide that trains other than those mentioned in a line-up may be operated at any time without notifying motor-car operators, and motor-cars must be protected by their crews at all times. Such protection consists of visual observation in both directions by the operator of a motor-car, and by flag protection. In this case, the maximum authorized speed for the motor-car was 25 miles per hour, and for the following train 40 miles per hour. Therefore, under the rules, since the motor-car and trailer were insulated to prevent actuation of automatic-block signals the only provision

for protecting the movement of the motor-car was spacing enforced by burning fusees. However, the operating rules of this carrier do not specifically provide for the dropping of lighted fusees at intervals when a movement is proceeding at less than normal speed in territory where the view is obscured. The chief rules examiner said the rule implied that, when conditions require, fusees should be dropped at intervals by the crew of a track motor-car. The operator of the motor-car involved had been examined on the rules about 9 years prior to the accident. At the time of the accident the motor-car was equipped with the required flagging signals. Since the operator of the motor-car was killed in the accident, it could not be determined what understanding he had of the rules, nor why he failed to provide protection. The only surviving member of the painting force was not qualified to operate track motor-cars.

During the 23-month period immediately preceding the date of the accident near Cooperstown Jct., the Commission investigated seven collisions between track motor-cars and trains. These accidents resulted in the death of 15 persons and the injury of 18, and were caused by failure to provide adequate protection for the movement of track motor-cars. In the instant case, the crew of the following train was not informed by signal indication as to the location of the preceding motor-car, and no protection was furnished for the motor-car. Since automatic-block signals do not furnish protection for insulated motor-cars, equivalent protection should be provided. The book of operating rules of this carrier contains manual-block rules for the blocking of trains, but these rules were not in effect on the line where the accident occurred. If the motor-car had been protected in accordance with the manual-block rules, the crew of the following train would have received information as to the presence of the motor-car in the block ahead.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to provide adequate protection for the movement of a track motor-car.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Delaware and Hudson Railroad Corporation provide adequate protection for the movement of track motor-cars on its line.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this fourth day of December, 1945.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.