

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2749
THE DELAWARE, LACKAWANNA & WESTERN
RAILROAD COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
AT OSWEGO, N. Y., ON
DECEMBER 7, 1943

SUMMARY

Railroad: Delaware, Lackawanna & Western
Date: December 7, 1943
Location: Oswego, N. Y.
Kind of accident: Head-end collision
Trains involved: Track motor-car : Yard engine
Engine numbers: 234 : 172
Speed: 5 m. p. h. : 5 m. p. h.
Operation: Yard rules
Track: Single; 11°40' curve; 0.74 percent
descending grade northward
Weather: Clear
Time: About 12:05 p. m.
Casualties: 1 killed; 8 injured
Cause: Yard engine being permitted to
enter tunnel after track motor-
car had been authorized to move
in opposite direction

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2749

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

THE DELAWARE, LACKAWANNA & WESTERN RAILROAD COMPANY

January 17, 1944.

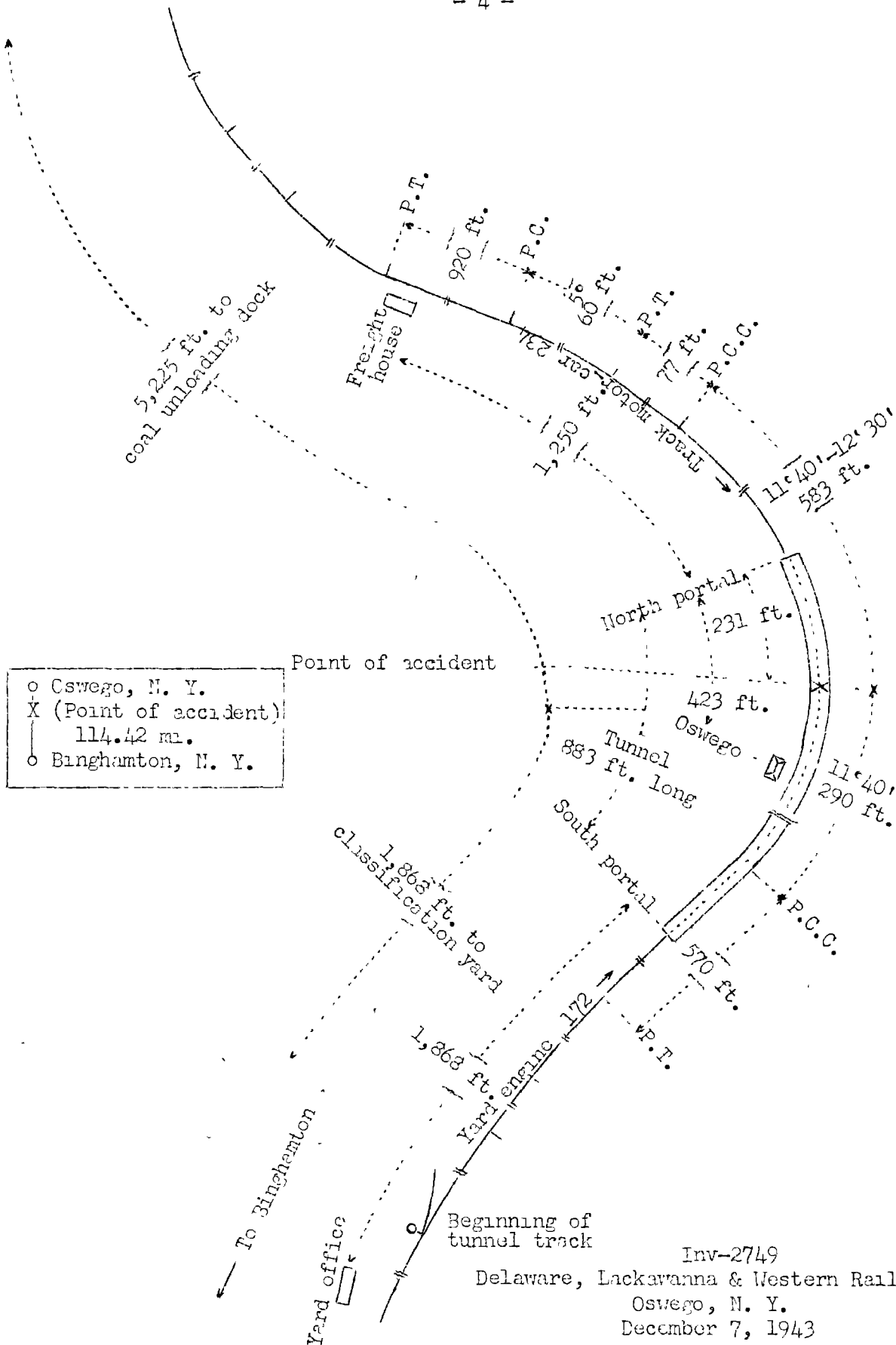
Accident at Oswego, N. Y., on December 7, 1943, caused by yard engine being permitted to enter tunnel after track motor-car had been authorized to move in opposite direction.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Chairman:

On December 7, 1943, there was a head-end collision between a track motor-car and a yard engine on the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad at Oswego, N. Y., which resulted in the death of one employee, and the injury of eight employees.

¹Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Chairman Patterson for consideration and disposition.



○ Oswego, N. Y.
 X (Point of accident)
 | 114.42 mi.
 ○ Binghamton, N. Y.

Inv-2749

Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad

Oswego, N. Y.

December 7, 1943

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Scranton Division extending between Oswego and Binghamton, N. Y., 114.42 miles. At Oswego the north end of a classification yard and a coal-unloading dock were, respectively, 1,868 feet south and 5,225 feet north of the station. A track, designated as the tunnel track, over which trains, engines and track motor-cars were operated under yard rules, connected the classification yard and the coal dock. This track extended through a tunnel 883 feet in length. The north portal was 423 feet north of the station. The accident occurred in the tunnel 231 feet south of the north portal. From the south there was a tangent 570 feet in length, which was followed by a compound curve to the left, having a maximum curvature of $12^{\circ}30'$, 290 feet to the point of accident and 583 feet beyond. From the north there were, in succession, a tangent 920 feet in length, a 5° curve to the right 60 feet, a tangent 77 feet, and the curve on which the accident occurred. Northward from the south portal the grade was 1.65 percent descending 292 feet, then it was 0.74 percent descending 360 feet to the point of accident and 231 feet beyond.

DEFINITIONS

* * *

Yard Engine--An engine assigned to yard service and working within yard limits.

* * *

Restricted Speed--Prepared to stop short of train, obstruction, or anything that may require train to stop. * * *

Operating rules read in part as follows:

17. * * *

Headlights will be displayed while passing through tunnels.

* * *

30a. Engine bell on yard engines must be rung * * * while running through tunnels * * *

* * *

Safety rules governing operation of motor cars read in part as follows:

236. * * * At curves and cuts where view is obstructed or where side clearance is not sufficient to take off a car, extra caution must be taken for protection.

237. Cars that cannot be quickly removed from track must be protected.

The maximum authorized speed in the tunnel was 15 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

About 11:45 a. m. the operator of track motor-car 234 communicated with the conductor of yard engine 172 on the telephone at the yard office, 1,868 feet south of the tunnel, and obtained authority to operate the motor-car from the coal-unloading dock to the classification yard. About 11:58 a. m., the motor-car departed southward from the coal-unloading dock, and while moving at an estimated speed of 5 miles per hour it collided with yard engine 172 at a point 231 feet south of the north portal of the tunnel.

Yard engine 172, headed northward, departed light from the classification yard about 12:01 p. m., en route to the freight house; located 1,250 feet north of the north portal of the tunnel, and while moving at an estimated speed of 5 miles per hour it collided with motor-car 234. The brakes of the engine had functioned properly.

From a south-bound motor-car moving in the vicinity of the point of accident, the view of a north-bound engine having an unlighted headlight was restricted to 64 feet, because of track curvature and darkness. A lighted headlight could be seen 200 feet.

Motor-car 234 was destroyed.

The weather was clear, but it was dark in the tunnel at the time of the accident, which occurred about 12:05 p. m.

The general foreman of the bridge force was killed, and eight employees of the bridge force were injured.

Discussion

The rules of the carrier governing operation on yard tracks provide that yard engines moving on yard tracks within yard limits must be operated prepared to stop short of a train or an obstruction. The headlight must be lighted and the bell rung while an engine is moving through a tunnel. Protection must be provided for a track-car of a type that cannot be quickly removed from the track; or when it is being operated in territory where there is insufficient side clearance or where the view is obstructed.

A bridge force was engaged temporarily in repair work at the coal-unloading dock, 1.34 miles north of the classification yard, and was required to pass through the tunnel four times daily. About 11:45 a. m. the operator of the motor-car used by this force communicated by telephone with the conductor of yard engine 172, who was in the yard office at that time. The conductor informed the motor-car operator to the effect that no north-bound movement would be permitted until after the motor-car had arrived at the classification yard; however, the conductor did not inform any other member of his crew as to the movement of the motor-car, and he did not accompany the engine until some time after the accident occurred. The motor-car proceeded southward, and about 20 minutes later it collided with the yard engine a short distance south of the north portal of the tunnel, where the curvature was 11°40'.

As the yard engine was approaching the point where the collision occurred, the speed was about 5 miles per hour and the engineer and a brakeman were maintaining a lookout ahead. The fireman and another brakeman were on the deck of the engine. The headlight was not lighted, the bell was not ringing and no member of the crew observed the motor-car until after the collision occurred.

Throughout a number of years prior to the time of the accident, only one yard engine was operated in this yard, and, except for the operation of the motor-car involved, which was only a temporary arrangement, the only motor-car operated through the tunnel was that of the section force. The section foreman protected the movement of his motor-car either by spiking switches in such manner that the yard engine could not enter the track leading to the tunnel, or by providing flag protection. When the motor-car involved began operation a few weeks before the accident, an arrangement was made whereby a yard clerk or the conductor of the yard engine would provide protection for the movement of the motor-car through the tunnel. In this instance, the yard clerk was absent, and the conductor answered the telephone, and authorized the southward movement

of the motor-car. About 16 minutes after the authority had been granted, the conductor gave instructions for the yard engine to proceed northward to the freight house, 1,250 feet north of the tunnel, and he proceeded to another point in the yard to perform other work. The conductor understood that he was required to instruct the engineer immediately not to permit the yard engine to enter the running track until after the motor-car had cleared at the south end. He could assign no reason for forgetting to tell the engineer. The investigation disclosed that it had not been customary for the headlight to be lighted while an engine was passing through this tunnel during daylight hours. If the headlight had been lighted, the members of the bridge force and the crew of the yard engine could have had a clear view a distance of 200 feet, and, considering the low speed of each movement, action could have been taken in time to avert the accident.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by a yard engine being permitted to enter a tunnel after a track motor-car had been authorized to move in opposite direction.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this seventeenth day of January, 1944.

By the Commission, Chairman Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.