

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3650
ELGIN, JOLIET & EASTERN RAILWAY COMPANY
IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR GILMER, ILL., ON
JUNE 7, 1955

SUMMARY

Date: June 7, 1955

Railroad: Elgin, Joliet & Eastern

Location: Gilmer, Ill.

Kind of accident: Rear-end collision

Equipment involved: Track motor-car : Freight train
with trailer

Train number: : 3

Engine number: : Diesel-electric unit
106

Consist: : 44 cars,
caboose

Estimated speeds: Standing : 30 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable, train orders, and
automatic block-signal
system

Track: Single; tangent; 0.69 percent
descending grade westward

Weather: Cloudy

Time: 12:10 p. m.

Casualties: 1 killed

Cause: Failure to provide adequate protec-
tion for movement of track motor-
car

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3630

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

ELGIN, JOLIET & EASTERN RAILWAY COMPANY

June 30, 1955

1675

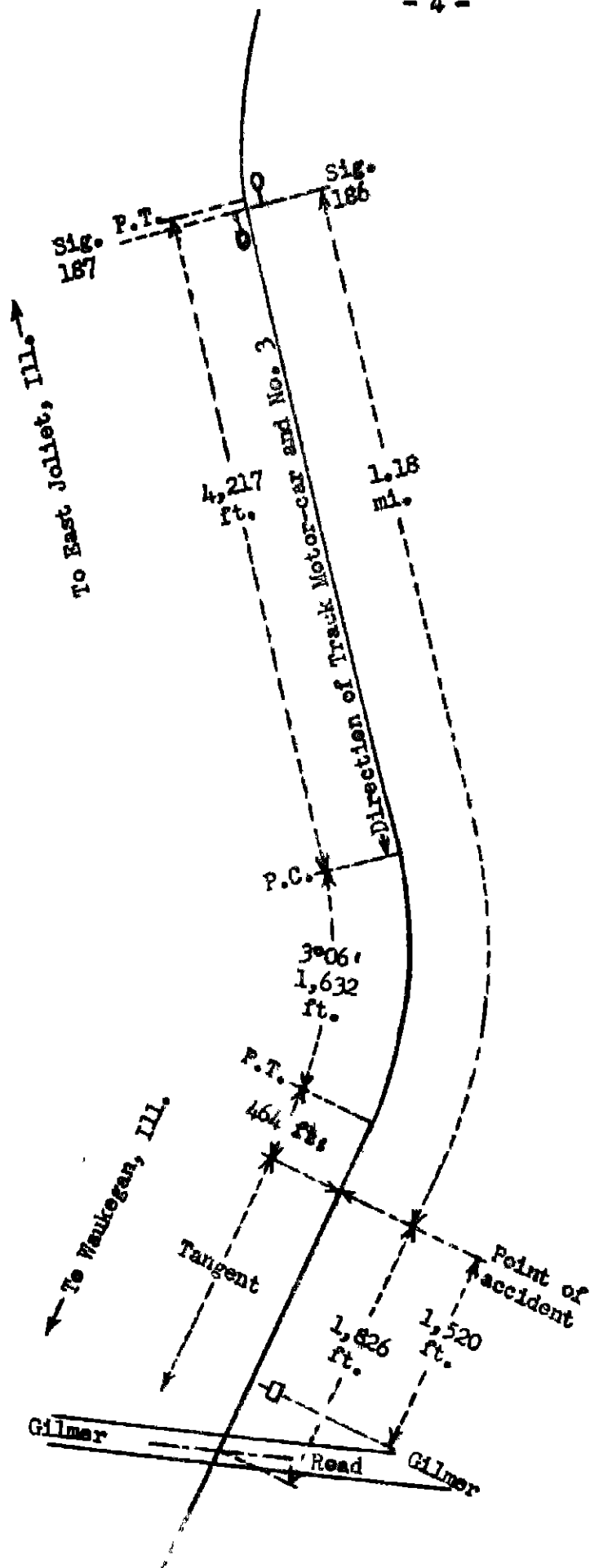
Accident near Gilmer, Ill., on June 7, 1955, caused by
failure to provide adequate protection for the
movement of a track motor-car.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

CLARKE, Commissioner:

On June 7, 1955, there was a rear-end collision between a track motor-car and trailer, coupled, and a freight train on the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern Railway at Gilmer, Ill., which resulted in the death of one maintenance-of-way employee.

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.



•	East Joliet, Ill.	37.63 mi.
•	Spaulding	15.59 mi.
•	Lake Zurich	3.34 mi.
•	Point of accident	0.29 mi.
•	Gilmer	3.42 mi.
•	Leithton	5.30 mi.
•	Rensieut	7.51 mi.
•	Waukegan, Ill.	

Report No. 3630
 Elgin, Joliet & Eastern Railway
 Near Gilmer, Ill.
 June 7, 1955

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Joliet Division extending between East Joliet and Waukegan, Ill., 73.08 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders, and an automatic block-signal system. The accident occurred on the main track at a point 56.56 miles west of East Joliet and 1,826 feet east of Gilmer Road, Gilmer, Ill. From the east, there are, in succession, a tangent 4,217 feet in length, a 3°06' curve to the right 1,632 feet, and a tangent 464 feet to the point of accident and a considerable distance westward. The grade is 0.69 percent descending westward at the point of accident.

Automatic signal 187, governing west-bound movements, and automatic signal 186, governing east-bound movements, are located 1.18 miles east of the point of accident. These signals are of the searchlight type and are continuously lighted.

This carrier's rules for the operation of track motor-cars read in part as follows:

78. Track cars must not be placed on tracks unless tracks are seen or known to be clear or until proper train line up has first been received.

79. Track car operators must obtain a train line up of train movements on prescribed form. Train line up will be in writing whether received from station operator or taken by motor car operator over phone * * *

82. Motor car operators will obtain further check on trains at all open stations when passing through enroute.

83. Employe in charge of motor cars will be required at all times to keep himself informed as to train movements in the vicinity of their operation so as to avoid unnecessary hazards from running in the face of traffic. They must protect themselves whenever and wherever necessary.

The maximum authorized speeds are 45 miles per hour for freight trains, 25 miles per hour for track motor-cars on tangent track, and 15 miles per hour for track motor-cars on curves.

Description of Accident

Track motor-car 462, towing trailer A-24, departed west-bound from Lake Zurich, 53.22 miles west of East Joliet, about 11:55 a. m. The track motor-car was occupied by a section foreman and three sectionmen. The trailer was loaded with 12 ties. The track motor-car was stopped at a point 3.34 miles west of Lake Zurich and 1,826 feet east of Gilmer Road to permit the sectionmen to adjust the ties on the trailer. Several minutes later the trailer was struck by No. 3.

No. 3, a west-bound second-class freight train, consisted of Diesel-electric unit 106, 44 cars, and a caboose. This train arrived at Lake Zurich at 11:50 a. m. and departed at 12:03 p. m., 5 hours 38 minutes late. While it was moving at an estimated speed of 30 miles per hour it struck the track motor-car and trailer.

No. 3 stopped with the front of the locomotive 1,879 feet west of the point of accident. The front of the locomotive was slightly damaged. The track motor-car and the trailer were moved westward to the point at which the locomotive of No. 3 stopped. They were demolished.

The section foreman was killed.

The weather was cloudy and there was a light haze at the time of the accident, which occurred at 12:10 p. m.

Track motor-car 462 was powered by a four-cylinder engine and was equipped with a three-speed transmission and a chain drive. It was equipped with windshields at front and rear and with a steel top. It had seating capacity for eight persons. The trailer was constructed with a flat wooden deck. Both the track motor-car and the trailer were insulated to prevent the shunting of track circuits.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 10.9 trains.

Discussion

On the day of the accident the section force was engaged in maintenance-of-way work between Lake Zurich and Rondout, 12.35 miles west of Lake Zurich. During the forenoon the foreman obtained two line-ups of train movements. These line-ups contained the information that No. 3 was expected to leave East Joliet at 7:30 a. m. and Spaulding, 15.59 miles east of Lake Zurich, at 9:30 a. m. About 11:30 a. m. the section foreman instructed one of the sectionmen to go to the station at Lake Zurich and obtain further information concerning No. 3 and two east-bound trains. At this time the track motor-car and trailer were a short distance west of the station. While the sectionman was at the station the train dispatcher informed the operator that No. 3 should be closely approaching Lake Zurich and would set off one car and add one car to the train at that point, and that No. 3 would meet the first two east-bound trains at Leithton, 7.05 miles west of Lake Zurich. The operator relayed this information to the sectionman. No. 3 stopped in front of the station as the sectionman was leaving. The sectionman returned to the track motor-car and told the foreman that No. 3 would set off and add cars to the train at Lake Zurich and would meet the two east-bound trains at Leithton. The foreman decided to leave Lake Zurich ahead of No. 3, and the track motor-car and trailer entered the main track at a switch located about

2,500 feet west of the station. At this time the occupants of the car could see that the locomotive of No. 3 had been detached and had entered an auxiliary track. After the track motor-car passed signal 186 one of the sectionmen observed that the signal was displaying a yellow aspect, indicating that No. 3 had not departed from Lake Zurich. A short time later the foreman observed that the ties on the trailer had shifted, and he stopped the track motor-car and directed the sectionmen to rearrange the load. As this work was being completed one of the sectionmen observed that No. 3 had entered the curve east of the point at which the track motor-car was standing. He warned the other members of the force. The foreman attempted to start the track motor-car, then alighted immediately before the trailer was struck by No. 3. He was struck by a tie when the collision occurred.

As No. 3 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead from their positions in the control compartment of the locomotive. The fireman, a qualified engineer, was operating the locomotive. The front brakeman and the flagman were in the control compartment, and the conductor was in the caboose. The headlight was lighted. As the locomotive was moving on the curve east of the point of accident the enginemen's view of the track ahead was somewhat obstructed by vegetation north of the track. The fireman first saw the track motor-car at a distance which he estimated was about 1,200 feet. When he saw the car he immediately made an emergency application of the brakes and sounded a warning on the pneumatic horn. The employees on the locomotive estimated that the speed was about 30 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

The rules of this carrier provide that track motor-cars must not be placed on tracks unless the tracks are seen or known to be clear or until a line-up of train movements has been received. The operators of track motor-cars are required to obtain further information on trains at each open office.

In the instant case the section foreman knew the location of No. 3 at the time he departed from Lake Zurich. Ordinarily when No. 3 includes cars to be set off at Lake Zurich it is at that station from 20 to 25 minutes, and apparently the foreman considered that there would be sufficient time for him to precede the train to Leithton. No. 3 departed from Lake Zurich 13 minutes after it arrived, and it appears probable that the departure was about 10 minutes earlier than anticipated by the foreman.

During the past 10 years the Commission has investigated 59 collisions, including the present case, in which track motor-cars were involved. These accidents resulted in the death of 94 persons and the injury of 177 persons.

Cause

This accident was caused by failure to provide adequate protection for the movement of a track motor-car.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this thirtieth day of June, 1955.

By the Commission, Commissioner Clarke.

(SEAL)

HAROLD D. McCOY,
Secretary.