

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3504
ERIE RAILROAD COMPANY
IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR GRANTON JCT., N. J., ON
JANUARY 19, 1953

SUMMARY

Date: January 19, 1953

Railroad: Erie

Location: Granton Jct., N. J.

Kind of accident: Rear-end collision

Trains involved: Freight : Passenger

Train numbers: Extra 1239 West : 815

Engine numbers: Diesel-electric :
unit 1239

Consists: 39 cars, caboose : 1 Diesel-powered
car

Estimated speeds: Standing : 7 m. p. h.

Operation: Signal indications

Track: Double; tangent; 0.10 percent
descending grade westward

Weather: Dense fog

Time: 9:59 a. m.

Casualties: 22 injured

Cause: Failure to operate following train in
accordance with a signal indication

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3504

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

ERIE RAILROAD COMPANY

April 6, 1953

Accident near Granton Jct., N. J., on January 19, 1953,
caused by failure to operate the following train in
accordance with a signal indication.

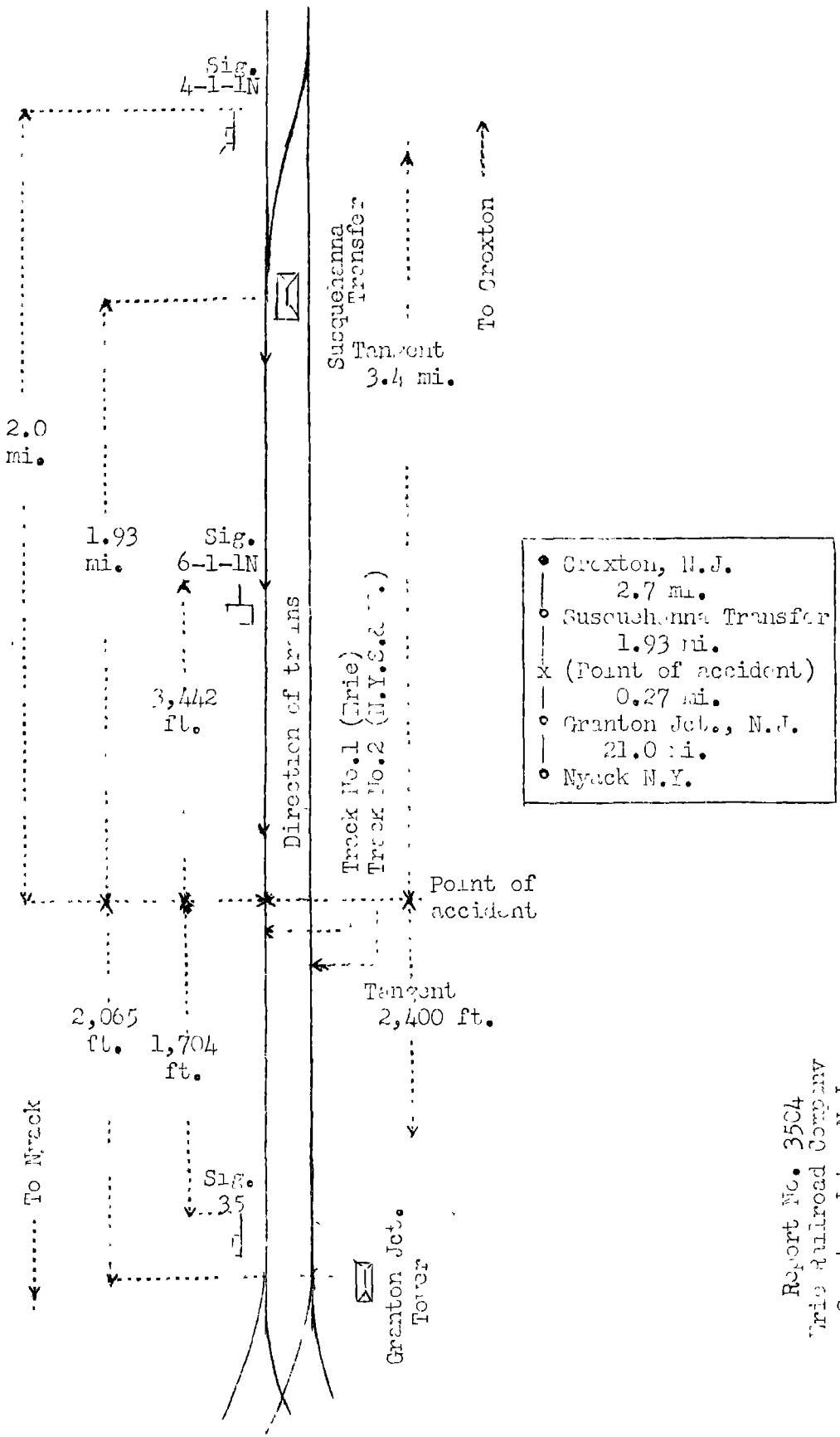
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On January 19, 1953, there was a rear-end collision between a freight train and a passenger train on the Erie Railroad near Granton Jct., N. J., which resulted in the injury of 22 passengers. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the New Jersey Public Utility Commission.

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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.



Report No. 3504
 Erie Railroad Company
 Granton Jct., N.J.
 January 28, 1923

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the railroad extending between Croxton, N. J., and Nyack, N. Y., 25.9 miles. Between Croxton and Granton Jct., N. J., 4.9 miles west of Croxton, the main track of the New York, Susquehanna and Western Railroad, hereinafter referred to as the N.Y.S.& W., parallels the main track of the Erie on the south. From north to south these tracks are designated as No. 1 and No. 2. Between these points west-bound trains of both lines are operated over track No. 1 and east-bound trains of both lines are operated over track No. 2. Train movements on both tracks are under the jurisdiction of the Erie. Between Susquehanna Transfer, 2.7 miles west of Croxton, and Granton Jct., trains moving with the current of traffic on track No. 1 are operated by signal indications. The accident occurred on track No. 1 at a point 1.93 miles west of Susquehanna Transfer and 2,065 feet east of the interlocking station at Granton Jct. Track No. 1 is tangent throughout a distance of 3.4 miles immediately east of the point of accident and 2,400 feet westward. The grade is 0.10 percent descending westward at the point of accident.

Automatic signals 4-1-1N and 6-1-1N, governing west-bound movements on track No. 1, and semi-automatic signal 35, governing west-bound movements from track No. 1 through the routes of the interlocking at Granton Jct., are located, respectively, 2 miles east, 3,442 feet east and 1,704 feet west of the point of accident. These signals are of the upper-quadrant semaphore type. Signals 4-1-1N and 6-1-1N are approach lighted. Signal 35 is continuously lighted. Aspects applicable to this investigation and the corresponding indications and names are as follows:

<u>Signal</u>	<u>Aspect</u>	<u>Indication</u>	<u>Name</u>
4-1-1N	Vertical-over-vertical-over-number plate	* * * PROCEED REGARDLESS OF FOLLOWING SUPERIOR TRAINS. * * *	
6-1-1N	Diagonal-over-number plate	PREPARE TO STOP AT NEXT SIGNAL. TRAIN EXCEEDING MEDIUM SPEED MUST AT ONCE REDUCE TO THAT SPEED.	APPROACH

	Horizontal- over-number plate	STOP; THEN PROCEED AT RESTRICTED SPEED.	STOP AND PROCEED
35	Horizontal- over-verti- cal-over- horizontal	PROCEED THROUGH CROSS- OVER OR TURNOUT WITH ENTIRE TRAIN AT NOT EXCEEDING MEDIUM SPEED, THEN RESUME NORMAL SPEED TO NEXT SIGNAL.	CLEAR- MEDIUM

The controlling circuits are so arranged that when the route is lined for movement from track No. 1 to the westward main track of the Erie at Granton Jct. and the blocks of both signals are unoccupied, signal 6-1-1N indicates Approach and signal 35 indicates Clear-Medium. When the block of signal 6-1-1N is occupied, this signal indicates Stop and Proceed

This carrier's operating rules read in part as follows:

DEFINITIONS

Medium Speed--One-half maximum authorized speed at point involved, but not to exceed thirty miles per hour unless otherwise provided.

Restricted Speed--Proceed prepared to stop short of train, obstruction, or anything that may require the speed of a train to be reduced.

35. The following signals will be used by flagmen:

Day signals--A red flag,
Torpedoes and
Fuses.

* * *

99. When a train stops under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must go back immediately with flagman's signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection, placing two torpedoes, and when necessary, in addition, displaying lighted fuses. * * *

* * *

When a train is moving under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must take such action as may be necessary to insure full protection. By night, or by day when the view is obscured, lighted fuseses must be dropped off at proper intervals.

The maximum authorized speeds are 60 miles per hour for passenger trains and 40 miles per hour for freight trains.

Description of Accident

Extra 1239 West, a west-bound Erie freight train, consisted of Diesel-electric unit 1239, 40 cars, and a caboosc. This train departed from Croxton, the last open office, at 9:33 a. m. and arrived at Susquehanna Transfer about 9:40 a. m. One car was set off at Susquehanna Transfer, and the train departed about 9:48 a. m. It passed signal 4-1-1N, which indicated Proceed-regardless-of-following-superior-trains, passed signal 6-1-1N, which indicated Approach, and stopped at signal 35, with the rear end of the train 3,442 feet west of signal 6-1-1N and 2,065 feet east of the interlocking station at Granton Jct. About 2 minutes later the rear end was struck by No. 815.

No. 815, a west-bound first-class N.Y.S. & W. passenger train, consisted of one Diesel-powered passenger car. This train originated at Susquehanna Transfer. It entered track No. 1 a short distance west of signal 4-1-1N, departed from Susquehanna Transfer at 9:51 a. m., 21 minutes late, and stopped at signal 6-1-1N, which indicated Stop and Proceed. It then proceeded westward, and while moving at an estimated speed of 7 miles per hour it struck the rear end of Extra 1239 West.

Neither train was derailed. The equipment of No. 815 was slightly damaged.

There was a dense fog at the time of the accident, which occurred about 9:59 a. m.

Discussion

After Extra 1239 West departed from Susquehanna Transfer the enginemen, the conductor, and the front brakeman were in the control compartment of the locomotive. The flagman was on the caboosc. Signal 6-1-1N indicated Approach, and the train

passed it at a speed of between 20 and 25 miles per hour. The engineer made a light application of the brakes after the train passed the signal, and the speed was reduced to about 5 miles per hour as the train approached signal 35. The range of vision of the employees on the locomotive was materially restricted by a dense fog. As the locomotive was closely approaching signal 35, the engineer initiated a service brake-pipe reduction. This action resulted in an undesired emergency application of the brakes, and the train stopped abruptly. After the brakes were released the train proceeded westward. The employees on the locomotive were not aware that a collision had occurred until they were so informed by the train dispatcher. The flagman said that he was on the rear platform of the caboose as the train passed signal 6-1-11. When the speed was reduced as the train approached Granton Jct. he entered the caboose to obtain a consist which was to be thrown off at that point. He had not thrown off fuses after the train departed from Susquehanna Transfer. When the emergency application of the brakes occurred he was thrown to the floor of the caboose. As soon as he regained his footing he alighted from the rear of the caboose. After he alighted he heard a train approaching from the east. He said that he immediately ran eastward and gave stop signals with a lighted fusee. He thought that he had reached a point about 125 feet east of the caboose when No. 815 passed him and that the collision occurred not more than 2 minutes after his train stopped.

On the day of the accident the crew of No. 815, consisting of an engineer and a conductor, was assigned to operate No. 814, an east-bound passenger train which terminates at Susquehanna Transfer, and to return westward from Susquehanna Transfer on No. 815. No. 814 arrived at Susquehanna Transfer at 9:46 a. m., 23 minutes late. Extra 1239 West was leaving the station as No. 814 arrived. No. 815 entered track No. 1 behind Extra 1239 West, and after passengers were picked up at the station it departed westward at 9:51 a. m. The brakes were applied and released before the train departed from Susquehanna Transfer, and they functioned properly when used after the train departed from that station. The headlight was lighted brightly. The engineer said that fog restricted his range of vision to a distance of 500 to 1,000 feet in the vicinity of Susquehanna Transfer and to a distance of about 50 feet in the vicinity of signal 6-1-11, which indicated Stop and Proceed. After stopping at that signal the train proceeded westward. The aspect displayed by signal 6-1-11 required No. 815 to stop short of a preceding train. The engineer said that because the speed recording device was

defective he did not know the **exact** speed at which the train was moving, but the speed was low and he was expecting to find a train ahead. He said that he did not see a lighted fusee nor the flagman of Extra 1239 West, and that he first became aware that Extra 1239 West had stopped when he saw the rear of the caboose. He thought that at this time his range of vision was restricted by fog to a distance of about 25 feet. When he saw the caboose he immediately made an emergency application of the brakes, but the collision occurred before the train could be stopped. As No. 815 was approaching the point where the accident occurred two employees not on duty were riding in the front vestibule. Each of these employees said that he was maintaining a lookout ahead, and each of them said that he did not see either a fusee or the flagman of Extra 1239 West before the collision occurred.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to operate the following train in accordance with a signal indication.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this sixth day of April, 1963.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

GEORGE W. LAIRD,
Acting Secretary.